



**Submission to Legco
Panel on Environmental Affairs**

10th March 2010

**Clear The Air views on the replacement of polluting Pre-Euro
and Euro 1 Diesel commercial vehicles.**

Summary:

We believe the government possesses a magic wand to make things happen should it choose to use it.

In California tobacco smoke is classed as a Toxic Air Contaminant along with diesel fumes. Twelve long years ago, in 1998, California identified diesel exhaust particulate matter (PM) as a toxic air contaminant based on its potential to cause cancer, premature death, and other health problems. Likewise old diesel engines also contribute to Hong Kong's fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) air quality problems – these are the lethal particulates that nose hairs cannot filter that enter the lungs unhindered. Hong Kong's curtain wall buildings and dense pavement population exacerbate the problem many-fold by trapping the emissions at roadside levels. Those at risk and most vulnerable are children whose lungs are still developing and especially those in push chairs, persons working at roadside levels like hawkers and road cleaners and the elderly who may have other serious respiratory or cardiac health problems. For health reasons Hong Kong last year raised tobacco taxation **as a health measure** and the Government must do the same with these old polluting diesel vehicles which damage our health. Health must be a priority beyond other fiscal considerations. A recent study from HKUST confirmed that roadside pollution is a major source of lethal pollution in Hong Kong and the Hedley Index confirms this.

There needs to be a substantial reduction on first registration duty of Euro 5 trucks and buses, and Euro 5 Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel with less than 6 ppm sulphur must be made mandatory to use in Hong Kong.

The majority of dense roadside pollution on major roadways such as Nathan Road is caused by old buses. Consideration must be given to allowing registration of hybrid electric buses free of first registration charges to encourage the bus companies to step up and follow other word cities using this technology.

A phased schedule must be set by which pre-Euro 4 diesel vehicles will no longer be allowed on the roads of Hong Kong – this turns the Government's magic wand into a big health measure stick. In the meantime, road tax must be raised by 50% in the first year, 70% in the 2nd year and 100% per year thereafter for those owners who wish to keep their old vehicles till they reach the cutoff surrender date. Tour buses, non franchised buses and minibuses must also be forced to convert to LPG or Euro 5 diesel operation, and Government must consider allowing registration of LPG private cars and vans. Currently many second hand diesel goods vans are imported from Japan and these must be able to meet the new standards.

The government should consider incentives for outside areas and buildings to provide electric vehicle charging stations for goods vehicles.

Clear The Air - 8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2579 9398 **Fax:** (852) 2565 9537 **email:** askus@cleartheair.org.hk



Adopted measures must be forceful as a health measure, not voluntary since the two-year replacement incentive scheme has only made a dent in the number of old diesel trucks, vans and buses. Such vehicles are the main reason for the poor air quality along our streets. Many owners whose tour buses were old and expiring used the scheme to renew their vehicles which they would have scrapped anyway. There are now 39,500 such old diesel vehicles on the roads, 23 % fewer than before the scheme and this is not enough to protect the health of the people, and to make Hong Kong a cleaner city.

The tiny cancerous particulates (PM 2.5) in diesel exhaust fumes are the major health hazard, putting young and elderly people at risk of having pulmonary diseases and other life threatening illnesses.

Governments in other developed parts of the world had the right attitude. Older vehicles have been banned from busy commercial districts and owners have been given hefty fines if rules are ignored. Exclusion areas must be mandated here which older vehicles cannot enter.

The Government is capable of concerted action, this was amply proven with the successful first phase of the plastic bag levy.

Greater incentives, higher fees, no-go zones and fines have to be implemented to get them off our streets as a health measure, and we also suggest punitive measures to get the early replacement enforced.

Euro 4 standards are more than 5 times less polluting than the older pre Euro vehicles; it is now time all these pre Euro and Euro 1 vehicles are replaced or scrapped. The Government must open surrender areas that owners can deliver their vehicles to without further charges.

Meanwhile consideration must be given to adding a hefty excise tax on pre Euro and Euro 1 spare parts imported into Hong Kong to discourage the further import of such thereby suggesting early replacement of vehicles by the owners.