

**Presentation to Legco Panels
on Environmental Affairs and Transport
6 November 1998**

I am an official spotter of smoky vehicles for the EPD and I represent the general public. I drive 6 days a week between Clearwater Bay and Wanchai and I report between 100 and 150 vehicles every month during 20 hours of daylight driving. I have reported 1000 vehicles this year in 214 days of reporting. That is 5 vehicles for every hour that I drive.

Your consultation paper states that “a poorly maintained diesel vehicle can emit 10 times more pollutants than a normal diesel vehicle.” In the long term, the sensible approach is to gradually phase out all diesel vehicles such as the state of California has done. However, something must be done **immediately** to stop the situation getting worse.

**Nothing the Government is doing at present is PREVENTING vehicles polluting.
Everything happens AFTER that vehicle has already polluted.**

The Government action in the past has been:-

- a) To make commercial vehicles undertake a simple smoke test as part of their annual roadworthiness inspection.
- b) The Police are now issuing a fixed penalty ticket of \$450.
- c) Smoky Vehicle Control Programme. All this does is report vehicles that have already polluted.

In 1997, the EPD asked 26,659 smoky vehicle owners to check their emissions. It costs HK\$310.00 to take the test within 14 days of receiving the notice. Vehicles are not tested under load or climbing hills, they are tested in neutral by pressing the accelerator pedal 3 times.

- 23,201 vehicles passed the test. 87%
- 2,862 vehicles failed the test. 11%
- 929 vehicles did not attend the test and had their licence cancelled.
- **ONLY 63 vehicles** had their licence cancelled for non-compliance of emission standards. This is less than 1%.

Why do so many vehicles pass the test? Simple. **Because the vehicle owners have their vehicles serviced BEFORE the emission test.**

Why do vehicle owners not have their vehicles serviced regularly and only do it when they are reported? **Because is cheaper to either pay the emission test fee or the fine.**

It is a question of basic economics.

What the government needs to do right now, i.e. **today**, is to make it more expensive to pollute than it would be to have your vehicle serviced on a regular basis.

The minibuses, taxis, franchise buses and trucks are all owned by companies. These companies profit by not maintaining their vehicles properly.

Get these companies (owners of the vehicles) to solve the problem that their vehicles create. If they were aware that it would cost them thousands of dollars to break the law i.e. pollute, then it would make financial sense to ensure that their vehicles did not.

That is basic economics.

Make every owner who has to attend the emission test bring a bankers draft for HK\$10,000 made out to the government. If his vehicle passes the test, he gets his money back in full after 1 month. If it fails, then he loses the money.

Increase the fixed penalty ticket to HK\$10,000.00

Ownership of a vehicle comes with a responsibility. That is to maintain it regularly and ensure that it does not pollute the air for others.

In punishing vehicle owners who allow their vehicles to pollute the air, you are acting on behalf of every man, woman and child in the SAR. That is an enormous responsibility. You have to make the right decision.

John Jarman