



Rob Stokes MP

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MEDIA RELEASE

Monday July 14 2014

BETTER, FASTER INFORMATION ON LOCAL AIR QUALITY

Residents now have ready access to information about their local air quality after a “new look” index of air quality updates was made available on the homepage of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH).

NSW Environment Minister Rob Stokes said easy to read colour coded notifications for nine areas of NSW, including Sydney, are now on the OEH home page, as well as daily forecasts and any current Air Pollution Alerts.

“Hourly updates for Sydney East-Central, South Western and North Western Sydney, the Hunter, Central Coast, Illawarra and regional NSW are now available on the OEH homepage, ensuring local air quality is just a click away.

Mr Stokes said a record number of people subscribed to Air Quality alerts during last year’s October bushfire crisis which showed just how important information about air quality is to the community.

“In response to the community demand OEH made the Air Quality Index easier to access and colour coded the index so it was easier to read and understand.

“Analysis of the state’s air quality in 2013, shows that NSW had a more smoky and dusty year than usual, due to bushfires in Western Sydney in September and across the Blue Mountains, Hunter and Central Coast in October and November,” Mr Stokes said.

“So far this year we have seen a few days of poor air quality during January and February in Western Sydney due to the very hot weather.

“Air quality was good in March and April. During May and June smoke from hazard reduction burning affected air quality as fire managers seized the opportunity to reduce fuel loads ahead of what is forecast to be to be a warm and dry second half of the year.”

NSW Air Quality data is obtained from 40 monitoring stations across NSW, which as well as recording PM10 and finer PM2.5 particles, also monitor Visibility and Ozone – which can reach high levels in the Sydney Basin in particular on hot still days during summer.

That information is compiled into the easy to read NSW Air Quality Index. Alerts are triggered when Ozone, Particle or Visibility readings reach **Poor**.

Mr Stokes urged the community to sign up to Air Quality Alerts where they can elect to receive alerts and daily forecasts via either SMS or email or both.

Handy Quick Air Quality Links

The OEH Air Quality Index information is available here:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au

A full summary of the 2013 is available here:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/140057nswairqual13.htm>

For information on how to reduce exposure to air pollution during bushfires or high Ozone days go to: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/air/Pages/simple-steps.aspx>

Information how the NSW government is tackling air pollution issues:

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/air/>