

EPA INQUIRY SUBMISSION

Submission by:

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QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What do you think are the key environmental challenges which will impact the EPA in the future?
- How can the EPA effectively work in partnership with other government agencies to meet the environmental challenges of the future?
- What aspect of the EPA's work do you value and wish to preserve in the future?

DISCUSSION

No one really knows with certainty what the key future environmental challenges are, but we can make predictions based on past trends and available data.

The concerns we could encounter in the future are qualitatively different from those of the past. It is difficult to predict technology changes and technical innovation, however we can anticipate the environmental consequences of change.

A growing population means there will be an increase in housing and utilization of more resources including fuel, food and water. This will result in more land being converted for accommodation, there will be a depletion of natural resources, and there will be an increase in greenhouse gases.

Meeting the food supply without compromising the environment will also be a challenge as more land will be required to be converted to farmland. A further complication could result in future farmland being used to grow crops for energy (biofuels) as well as to feed the increase in population. It is considered that climate change could also make it challenging to grow crops and impact on our future food supply as farming practices are dependent on consistent climate conditions.

As we move to a more sustainable state we are going to see a greater variety of types of energy sources such as solar, wind, hydropower etc. In order for these sources to provide sufficient energy, these sources could require land that was previously undisturbed.

The expected population and economic growth, pollution, food supply, rapid urbanization and the emergence of new energy resources (as well as climate change) and adapting to a future which is uncertain, will challenge our existing strategies that we have developed to manage impacts on the environment and human health and wellbeing.

Solutions to these problems will depend on the EPA to connect and form partnerships with all levels of government, particularly local government, as well as collaborate with a wide range of professionals.

The challenges we face going forward in this next area of environmental management are possibly design challenges. That is, to what extent will the next generation help us reduce our energy needs, and what degree should we be thinking about urban planning strategies.

The EPA should continue to provide environmental protection, environmental leadership, establish standards, conduct research, provide technical support to local government and other agencies. The EPA should also continue to ensure industry compliance with standards and legislation, particularly large industry, as well as address difficult and emerging environmental issues. However, licensing and approvals of small-scale operations and some of the day-to-day activities that overlap local government responsibilities could be carried out by local councils.

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