

EPA SUBMISSION – NOISE ABATEMENT

This submission concerns the failure of EPA in its role of noise abatement relating to motor vehicle noise.

Over recent years, the issue of increasing motor vehicle noise has been a significant community concern. The EPA has spectacularly failed in its duty to prevent increasing vehicle noise, caused by vehicle owners deliberately modifying motor vehicles to create more noise. In Australia, we have an appalling record on noise pollution and failures by regulating authorities to apply even current lax legislation.

Under Commonwealth legislation and more particularly, Australian Design Rules, it is illegal to modify vehicle components to cause more noise. However, due to incompetence, disinterest or corruption, the EPA appears to disregard this legislation. Under Victorian law, motor vehicle owners are allowed to deliberately increase motor vehicle noise up to generous limits. This is a situation which should not be tolerated and legislation should be made compatible with Commonwealth legislation, preventing ANY modifications which increase vehicle noise.

I have lived and worked for lengthy periods in Europe where noisy motor vehicles do not exist. EPA bureaucrats should visit Europe to find out how they achieve almost 100% compliance. Unfortunately, it seems that the cultural issues around creating as much noise as possible seem to be uniquely Australian as is lack of enforcement due to soft legal processes or corruption of authorities by self-interest groups.

EPA statistics indicate that approximately 2100 noisy motor vehicles were inspected in 12 months and only 13 infringement notices issued. This is an unbelievably small proportion of illegally modified vehicles and indicates that EPA operations in this area are totally ineffective. There are tens of thousands of vehicles in the state of Victoria which have been deliberately modified to create more noise and the problem is worsening. For example, there is large number of Harley Davison motor cycles in Victoria which do not meet even the lax noise limit requirements. Informal discussions with EPA staff indicated that this was standing knowledge in the office and nothing was done about it. Corrupt behaviour such as this should not be tolerated. Urgent action is needed now.

The EPA seems not to appreciate the significant public physical and psychological health issues created by excessive environmental noise and further investigation seems necessary.

There is a total lack of coordination amongst government agencies in relation to vehicle noise issues. The police claim not to have the equipment necessary to test motor vehicles for noise and therefore have no interest in policing this issue. Vic Roads is similarly dismissive as noise does not appear to be high on its priorities. EPA has responded to submissions in the past by simply stating the generous noise limits allowed and don't care about increasing noise levels. Therefore nothing is achieved. It is well past the time when some agency should have taken the initiative on this issue.

Victorian legislation needs to be amended to prevent ANY vehicle modifications which increase noise from the manufactured standard. Concurrent with this will be the need for legislation to reduce the noise levels allowed for new vehicles down to industry best practice rather than the excessive limits currently allowed.