

What do you think are the key environmental challenges which will impact the EPA in the future?

Increase in population and consequential need for continual education and proactive awareness campaigns for immigrants, school children and the general population.

Increased demand and threat to natural resources and fragile ecosystems;

Increase in effects of industrial activity and consequential clean-up problems;

Agricultural, Commercial and Political interests which overwhelm the mandate of the EPA;

Insufficient power to ensure good whole of government and community regulatory practice. This means that EPA needs to be a “Statutory Referral Agency”

Increased pollution to waterways, air, aquifers and land waste management and litter; too many departments with unclear final accountability and responsibility. EPA should have this;

What aspects of the EPA’s work do you value and wish to preserve in the future?

All current aspects – they generally need to be enhanced;

Holding environmental violators to account; Integration of economic, social and environmental considerations; the precautionary principle;

Advocating environmental values and standards; auditing other agencies to ensure they are carrying out statutory obligations;

Enhanced community education (schools, immigrants and general population)

Intergenerational equity; conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity; improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms; integrated environmental management; enforcement; accountability

How can the EPA effectively work in partnership with other government agencies to meet the environmental challenges of the future?

EPA must have a much stronger mandate to apply to whole of government management principles;

EPA must be independent (political influence etc.), have the power to act, but work in consultative and collegiate manner;

EPA must have delegation responsibility for remediation of bad or illegal practice. Its role then would become as a monitor;

How can the EPA's role in safeguarding the community against the health impacts of pollution be clarified or strengthened?

Stronger legislation and a substantially increased funding and staffing to realistically meet demand.

Worksafe type model backed up by strong accountability consequences for breaches;

By focusing on prevention and applying the precautionary principle: identifying areas at risk and proactively addressing issues rather than waiting for problems to occur and then dealing with them;

By greater transparency and sharing findings with all stakeholders;

Stronger legislation protecting the environment;

By giving the EPA more resources and power to punish offenders and to prevent environmental damage;

By requiring the EPA to follow through with prosecuting offenders. At present there appears to be a reluctance to enforce and punish industry and government offenders;

Greater community awareness of required safety standards. Potential offenders will therefore be influenced by community norms and pressures.

How could statutory frameworks more effectively prevent future environmental risks and land use conflicts?

EPA powers need to be enhanced to ensure they are pro-active and not just a reactive agency;

EPA needs to have power to set standards e.g. Agriculture feed lots, and advocate to the government for appropriate legislation when required;

Environmental safety and health must be a higher priority than short term economic interests;

Long term affects and costs of mining, and other commercial enterprises must be fully accounted for in viability and rehabilitation planning;

What role should the EPA play in emergency management?

EPA must be involved in emergency response planning which must take into account long term effects of emergency response.

Must have sufficient influence in planning any response involving any emergency with environmental effects;

Must have strategic planning influence in setting standards for prevention and safeguards;

How can the EPA better identify and, where necessary, address problems that are the result of past activity?

Many past issues have not been dealt with due to lack of resources, staff, funding and political will.

EPA's mandate needs to be wide enough so it may to enter or audit any domain where the environment may be under threat.

What role should the EPA play in improving environmental outcomes beyond those necessary to safeguard Human Health?

Advocating for the environment

Protecting ecosystems, safeguarding ecological integrity and prioritising conservation

Imparting best practice environmental management principles

Safeguarding and enhancing habitat for native fauna

Safeguarding and enhancing conservation of native flora

Applying Ramsar advice

Educating new immigrants about the fragility of the Australian environment, the value of native flora and fauna, and the danger of some introduced species.

Generally raising awareness about environmental values

Discouraging the ownership of cats.

Addressing climate change by protecting, encouraging and enhancing wildlife corridors so that native fauna can migrate and adapt.

Addressing the source of litter and waste by discouraging industry packaging. This could be achieved through raising awareness, encouraging container refunds, and imposing a tax on packaging (to the producer).

Human health ultimately depends on a healthy and biodiverse environment. Depletion of natural resources - water, biological, geological.

Australia's natural environment needs protection against invasive and exotic threats.

What role should the EPA play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

This is so important that a separate authority may need to exist.

EPA must have legislated power to control emissions according to realistic future and international goals.

How do you see environmental justice being applied to the work of the EPA?

Concept of environmental justice (“distributive, participatory and restorative”) must be enhanced.

Though communities must be aware and active, there is an intense institutional inertia which overcomes volunteer and community energy. Funding must exist for community advocacy and support.

What can we adopt from other regulators and regulatory models to implement best-practice approaches and ensure that the EPA can rise to key future challenges?

Worksafe type principles Apply strict current principles to antiquated operations.

Are there any other issues relevant to the Terms of Reference that you would like to raise?

EPA Governance:

EPA should be set up as an independent agency reporting to parliament with a larger representative (Government agencies and general community) board (say 9 members). Board should employ CEO.

Risk is not a fully comprehensive tool. Despite risk there must be public awareness and proper and good practice.

Sufficient staff who would have guaranteed career structures. This would improve institutional knowledge.

What can the EPA do to avoid potential future problems?

Improve public image, quality of advertising.

Have a sufficiently robust administration backed up by a well-qualified and funded board

EPA has not had the capacity to adequately protect the environment;

Environmental values must be prioritised over political and short term commercial parameters;

International agreements such as RAMSAR JAMBA and CAMBA need to be respected;

Best regards,

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