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## MEDIA RELEASE

# VW Diesel Debacle - A Wake Up Call

News that Volkswagen and possibly other car manufacturers have deceived regulators about deadly diesel emissions is a timely wake-up call to Australian law-makers.

"Air pollution is an invisible killer that has been shown to cause more deaths in Australia than the annual road-toll, but Australian diesel engine emissions rules are many years behind Europe and the United States" said Dr Liz Hanna, President of the Climate and Health Alliance.

"The health damages from motor-vehicle related pollution in Australia in 2000 was shown to be \$2.4 billion, now the figure would be much higher due to big rises in air pollution in that time" Dr Hanna said.

"Micro-particulates in diesel emissions were declared as a Class One Carcinogen by the World Health Organisation in June 2012, putting diesel emissions next to smoking as a cause of Cancer. There is no safe level of exposure to diesel emissions" said Dr Hanna.

In air pollution hotspots such as the inner-west of Melbourne, diesel emissions from port transport trucks are associated with asthma rates that are 50% higher than normal.

Phil Hill, Lawyer with Environmental Justice Australia said: "Emissions standards for cars sold in Australia are years behind the stricter standards set in Europe and the US, and we have to wait until mid-2018 to catch up."

"While the sales of diesel passenger and other light vehicles have jumped 130% over the past 7 years, Australian emission standards have not kept up" Mr Hill said.

"This lax attitude to health protective policies is unconscionable. It will inevitably have directly contributed to deaths, as well as cardiovascular and lung disease," said Dr Hanna.

Commonwealth, state and territory Environment Ministers are meeting soon to reach agreement on a National Clean Air Agreement. Indications are that the agreement is going to represent the lowest common denominator option, and will not provide any boost in legal protection from harmful air pollution.

The threat of air pollution to the health of all Australians needs to be taken far more seriously. The draft National Clean Air Agreement is a lame duck and does nothing to tackle the most significant sources of air pollution such as coal mines and coal fired power stations.

We call on the Ministers to follow the leadership shown in Europe and the United States and respond to the concerns of community and environmental groups in Australia and implement stricter air pollution standards.

**For comment:**

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*[Environmental Justice Australia](#) use the law to protect our environment, and we work to change our laws to make sure they protect the right of all Australians to clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems.*

*[The Climate and Health Alliance](#) (CAHA) is a not-for-profit organisation that is a national alliance of organisations and people in the health sector working together to raise awareness about the health risks of climate change and the health benefits of emissions reductions.*

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