

**Nick Smith**

2 August, 2011

### **Improvements in air quality welcomed**

New Zealand's average number of air quality exceedances dropped to 3.5 in 2010 – the best level since nationwide records began in 2000, Environment Minister Nick Smith says.

Dr Smith today outlined the result at the annual conference of the Clean Air Society of Australia and New Zealand in Auckland.

“Clean air is important to improving the health of New Zealanders with an estimated 1100 people per year dying prematurely from particulate pollution. Today's report highlighting the lowest number of exceedances in a decade shows our efforts to convert to cleaner home heating and vehicles are making a difference,” Dr Smith said.

“Our Government has ramped up spending by 12 times on converting homes to clean heating from \$2.2 million in the last government's term to \$26 million during this Parliamentary term. This has enabled 20,000 households to be converted from old fires to heat pumps, low-emission log burners and pellet fires. Fuel and vehicle emission standards have been tightened and regional councils have been imposing tighter restrictions on industry.

“There is still more to be done to meet the revised Air Quality Standards by 2016 for lower polluted areas and 2020 for the most polluted areas. This is a particular challenge for Timaru, Reefton and Tokoroa that are yet to show any signs of improvement.

“I am announcing today measures to enable an additional 1250 homes a year to be converted to clean heating as well as a compliance strategy to ensure regional councils have plans to meet the new standards. Some such as Nelson and Christchurch are showing what can be done. My message to others is that they need to act or I will use my powers to ensure we make the necessary progress.

“Clean air is an important part of New Zealand's clean, green brand. The new Air Quality Standard is realistic and I am determined that we reach it.”

#### **Attached:**

##### **Compliance Strategy to meet the PM10 standard**

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/air/clean-healthy-air-for-all-new-ze...>

##### **PM10 Air Quality Monitoring Data for 2010**

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/environmental-reporting/air/air-quality/pm10/annu...>