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**Residents
Against
Polluting
Stacks Inc**

MEDIA RELEASE – 8/6/24

HEALTH DISMISSES CONCERNS

A delegation of RAPS members met with the Minister for Health, Morris Iemma and members of NSWHealth late last week in the hope of having their concerns about the effects of the M5 East stack addressed. Those hopes were dashed. In fact, the tenure of the meeting with Greg Stewart, Deputy Director General, Health and other senior members of NSW Health was, at times, not only dismissive, but also quite confronting.

The meeting had been arranged through local Canterbury MP, Linda Burney following the latest NSW Health study showing "no association" between stack emissions and health problems for residents, and no need for NSW Health to do any more investigation into this issue. RAPS argued that the experimental design and the statistical analysis of the study were fundamentally flawed. The study, based on a random telephone survey, was limited to a 4 week period, excluded those under 18 years, did not address long-term health effects, misused CSIRO calculations, and was not subject to independent review. Moreover, it contradicted an earlier study where specialists examined affected residents and found "a prima facie case" of links between stack emissions and symptoms such as sore throats, eyes and headaches.

Charles Briers, RAPS President said, "On the one hand NSW Health admits there are health problems from the tunnel and around the stack, and yet on the other, it refuses to carry out the necessary investigations to scientifically confirm this and take decisive action to protect residents and drivers, rather than the RTA and its policies.

We pointed out that the way the results were presented was misleading, especially with the claim that there was no association between the unfiltered stack and the health problems suffered by people around the stack. We got nowhere except to learn that the word "causality" had been deliberately avoided in favour of "association" - a futile semantic exercise because the report has already been used to validate the policy of not filtering Sydney's tunnels. NSW Health admitted the limitations of the study, but stood by their untenable conclusion. We felt very dispirited because we had all gone there in good faith as community representatives expecting our concerns to be taken seriously. Obviously, scientific truth is being over-ridden by the political agenda."

Another RAPS delegate, whose whole family's health has been affected by the stack, presented the minister with samples of dirt wiped from her window-sills and fly-screens. "Every day I have to go out and wipe off this filthy, oily stuff It's a disgrace. Goodness knows what it is doing to our health. Like many of my neighbours, we have been sick since the motorway opened and have medical certificates from the doctor to prove this but I don't feel I was taken seriously, or even got any sympathy. What proof do they want? Everyone knows that vehicle pollution does you harm just as they know about the danger of cigarettes - it's common sense. Yet trying to get the Health Department to acknowledge the danger from the unfiltered stack and to act to protect our health is proving to be impossible."

Mark Curran, RAPS' Vice President said it was clear from the meeting, however, that there were obvious concerns about in-tunnel conditions. "There was also discussion about last year's in-tunnel study which identified problems in the tunnel and recommended putting up warning signs – a recommendation ignored by the RTA so far. We asked for the study to be extended to look at the combined impacts of the pollution and multiple exposures for those travelling through the tunnel several times a day. "

Linda Burnley has promised to keep up her support on the issue and intends to write to the Minister again this week.

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