

7 September 2026

By email: LSC@nt.gov.au

Committee Secretary
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Submission on the Environment Legislation Amendment (Safe Air) Bill 2026 (Serial 73)

The Heart Foundation is Australia's leading cardiovascular health organisation, working for more than 60 years to prevent heart disease, support people living with heart conditions, and improve heart health for all Australians. In the Northern Territory, our work focuses on reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease across the Territory, where heart disease remains one of the leading causes of mortality. Our 25-year vision *Health for Every Heart*¹ aims for heart health to be achievable by all people in Australia by 2050. Through this vision, we recognise that heart health is influenced not only by individual risk factors, but also by preventable risks that are shaped by the environments where people live, work and gather. Environments that support heart health need clean air, safe housing, access to healthy food, active transport, and strong community settings.

Air pollution is a preventable, and internationally recognised, cardiovascular health risk. Robust evidence links exposure to fine particulate matter and combustion-related pollutants to increased cardiovascular mortality, ischaemic heart disease, heart attack, stroke, heart failure and arrhythmias.^{2,3,4,5,6,7}

In Australia, fine particulate matter (PM2.5) exposure was estimated to contribute to 2,616 deaths each year between 2006 and 2016.⁸ Globally, almost 70% of deaths attributable to ambient air pollution are cardiovascular in origin. Unlike behavioural risk factors, air pollution exposure cannot be modified by individual behaviour change.⁹ It instead needs systemic, population level intervention, underscoring the need for enforceable, health-protective air quality standards.⁶

We therefore welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the Environment Legislation Amendment (Safe Air) Bill 2026, given the direct relationship between environmental conditions and cardiovascular health outcomes for Territorians.

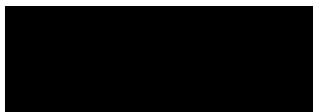
We are concerned that the Bill, despite its title, establishes an air quality monitoring scheme without any accompanying enforceable ambient air quality standards, emission thresholds or limits, or new industry duties to safeguard air quality. In August 2026, the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority announced prosecution of INPEX in relation to significant underreporting of total emissions to air in tonnes at the Ichthys LNG facility, demonstrating that measurement alone, without enforceable limits, is not sufficient to protect community health.¹⁰

Based on the above, the Heart Foundation recommends that the Committee:

- Amend the Bill to include prescribed thresholds, set in line with best-practice public health protective standards and consistent with the National Environmental Protection Measures, for stack emissions of specified air toxics (at minimum benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene, the BTEX compounds); the duration of “hot venting” events; and measured ambient air quality. The Bill should also define the response and consequences of exceeding these health-protective thresholds, such as investigation pathways and penalties, where relevant.
- Ensure ambient air quality standards prescribed under the Bill are set at levels protective of cardiovascular health, and that monitoring data is published in as close to real time as possible, so that Territorians at risk of heart disease can take steps to reduce their exposure during poor air quality events.
- Hold public hearings on the Bill, and invite evidence directly from public health experts, clinicians and community organisations, given the direct and serious significance of safe air regulation to the health of Territorians.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact us if further information would assist the Committee's consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Le Smith

National Manager Health & Wellbeing | General Manager NT

¹ National Heart Foundation of Australia. Health for every heart. Accessed 4 September 2026. <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/health-for-every-heart?tab=1>

² Zhang S, Chen L, Qian ZM, et al. Associations between air pollution and the risk of first admission and multiple readmissions for cardiovascular diseases. *Heart*. 2024;110(5):337–345. doi:10.1136/heartjnl-2023-322682

³ Münzel T, Sørensen M, Lelieveld J, et al. A comprehensive review/expert statement on environmental risk factors of cardiovascular disease. *Cardiovasc Res*. 2025;121(11):1653–1678. doi:10.1093/cvr/cvaf119

⁴ Zhao Y, Yang X, Du Y, et al. Global cardiovascular disease burden attributable to particulate matter pollution, 1990–2021: an analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021 and forecast to 2045. *BMC Cardiovasc Disord*. 2025;25(1):401. doi:10.1186/s12872-025-04724-6

⁵ de Bont J, Jaganathan S, Dahlquist M, Persson Å, Stafoggia M, Ljungman P. Ambient air pollution and cardiovascular diseases: an umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *J Intern Med*. 2022;291(6):779–800. doi:10.1111/joim.13467

⁶ Brauer M, Casadei B, Harrington RA, Kovacs R, Sliwa K; WHF Air Pollution Expert Group. Taking a stand against air pollution – the impact on cardiovascular disease: a joint opinion from the World Heart Federation, American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association, and the European Society of Cardiology. *Eur Heart J*. 2021;42(15):1460–1463. doi:10.1093/eurheartj/ehaa1025

⁷ He Y, Qiu H, Wang W, Lin Y, Ho KF. Exposure to BTEX is associated with cardiovascular disease, dyslipidemia and leukocytosis in national US population. *Sci Total Environ*. 2024;919:170639. doi:10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.170639

⁸ Hanigan IC, Broome RA, Chaston TB, et al. Avoidable mortality attributable to anthropogenic fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in Australia. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021;18(1):254. doi:10.3390/ijerph18010254

⁹ World Heart Federation. World Heart Report 2024: clearing the air to address pollution's cardiovascular health crisis. 2024. <https://world-heart-federation.org/report2024/>

¹⁰ Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority. Ichthys LNG Pty Ltd prosecution – INPEX operations. 2026. Accessed 4 September 2026. <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/news/2026/ichthys-lng-pty-ltd-prosecution-inpex-operations>