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Air quality is not the real problem

SIR, — I have referred your Seditorial calling for action on smoky exhausts (April 26) to the next land transport committee. If the region's representatives agree that this is a high priority for **ratepayer-funded** interventions, so be it. Hopefully, they will apply slightly more analysis than "Auckland's got a problem, so we should have it too."

'Auckland's humid atmosphere, dispersed network and enormous diesel volumes combine to create a serious transport-related air-quality problem there, justifying special action. At the time of Auckland's campaign and subsequent lobbying to establish lower-sulphur diesel, the then committee discussed the relevance of the issue to Wellington.

We noted that the most recent Environment Ministry study of local air-quality **problems** in major cities omitted Wellington altogether.

Wellington has a fresher climate, different **geography** and lower diesel volumes. Monitoring here indicates we simply do not have the alarming concentrations of emissions measured in Auckland (or, for different reasons, Christchurch). **Alert-level** air-quality problems in this region (in Wainuiomata, Upper Hutt and Masterton) are related to **particulates** in winter, not to traffic.

I have suggested there are some transport-related **air-quality** problems here, and have asked future monitoring to include daytime conditions in the Mt Victoria tunnel and canyon streets such as Featherston St. My attitude is that, when there is substantial evidence that intervention will **make a** real difference to real problems, we should **act**.

To date the land transport committee has given a higher priority to funding interventions where we **have evidence** of real **local** problems. For example, Wellington has an abnormally high proportion of pedestrian casualties in its regional crash statistics **and we are** acting with the Land Transport Safety Authority on this issue. These are real casualties, not calculations modelled from a desktop study. Perhaps **The Dominion** will give this campaign as much space as it gives smoky vehicles.

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Wellington