

Small Smoke Particles The Wrong Target
Letter to NZ Herald on Smoke Pollution
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There is not enough evidence for Auckland Council to introduce its smoke pollution measures.

The association between premature death and levels of small particulate pollution only emerges when very sensitive statistical tests are used which are functioning at their limits of capability. These tests are immensely susceptible to magnifying errors, which account for the widely differing excess death rates.

The fact that these apparent increases in death affect all age groups and degrees of health, and occur almost immediately, has not been explained by any accepted biological mechanism, despite 20 years of extensive and expensive research.

If the Council is interested in valid Public Health Measures, then it should be concentrating on limiting particulates from vehicles, which the Ministry of the Environment reports show to be the major problem in Auckland, as opposed to the rest of NZ, where it is fire burning.

Or, even better, it should look closely at its' alcohol policies, where we have definite evidence and mechanisms, that alcohol misuse produces an excess injury, illness, death and unhappiness rate which is many, many times that of the hypothetical small particulate pollution.