

Health risks for urban kids exposed to traffic pollution, experts warn

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Researchers are calling for Victorian policy makers to emulate California, where efforts to reduce children's exposure to pollution has been linked to measurable health improvements. Credit: Pixabay

Urban childcare centres should be built away from busy urban roads to minimise kids' exposure to traffic pollution, experts warn.

In a commentary paper published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, University of Melbourne researchers have analysed [childcare](#) locations and road vehicle density in inner-city Melbourne.

The paper highlights increasing evidence that exposure to traffic-related air pollution is a significant contributor to the prevalence of asthma and allergies—Australia's most common cause of children's GP visits.

Of the 278 identified inner-suburban childcare centres, 10.4 percent (29) were within 60 metres of a major road, defined by the researchers as having a daily load of 20 000 vehicles a day or more.

Researchers have detailed one extreme example where a new childcare centre is under development less than 10 metres from an intersection used by a daily average of 4650 trucks.

Researchers are calling for Victorian policy makers to emulate California, where efforts to reduce children's exposure to pollution has been linked to measurable health improvements.

The researchers recommend that [policy makers](#) need to adopt a series of strategies including:

- Appropriate "buffer zones" between busy roads and childcare centres
- Indoor ventilation and filtration
- Vehicle anti-idling and idle reduction policies
- Roadside barriers
- Designing outdoor play-areas away from traffic-related air

pollution flow movements

- Play-time structured to avoid peak traffic hours
- Encouragement of active transportation, such as walking and bike riding.

University of Melbourne Honorary Research Fellow Clare Walter said children's health would likely benefit from greater consideration given to reducing traffic-related air pollution exposure during the planning process of childcare centres.

"Our National Environmental Protection Measures legislation is underpinned by the objective that "all Australians enjoy the benefits of equivalent protection from air pollution,"" Ms Walter said.

"But until we follow international examples and actively seek to reduce children's exposure to traffic [pollution](#), we are failing our most vulnerable members of society."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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