

Mercury pollution significantly higher in Victoria

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"Historically lax" regulations around pollution control have led to much higher levels of mercury emission from coal-fired power stations in Victoria, according to a new study from The Australian National University (ANU).

The study compared mercury levels in sediment from lakes close to

[power stations](#) in the Victoria's Latrobe Valley and the NSW Hunter Valley.

According to lead author Dr. Larissa Schneider, there was a stark difference.

"New South Wales and Victoria have historically had very different regulatory approaches. Victorian power stations have used "dirtier" coal—or coal with a higher mercury concentration—and had less efficient [pollution control](#) devices," she said.

"All of this adds up, power stations in the Latrobe Valley emit around 10 times more mercury than power stations in the Hunter."

Dr. Schneider says with Australia working to ratify the Minamata Convention, which outlines international guidelines on controlling mercury pollution, she believes it may be time to look at a more uniform approach that takes into account best practices.

"Victoria has recently announced changes. If the Minamata Convention is ratified other states may be obliged to implement better pollution control technology. This study shows how effective that can be," Dr. Schneider said.

"Regulating even basic pollution control technologies can lead to substantial reductions in [environmental pollution](#)."

The research has been published in *Environmental Pollution*.

More information: Larissa Schneider et al, Mercury atmospheric emission, deposition and isotopic fingerprinting from major coal-fired power plants in Australia: Insights from palaeo-environmental analysis from sediment cores, *Environmental Pollution* (2021). [DOI:](#)

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Provided by Australian National University

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