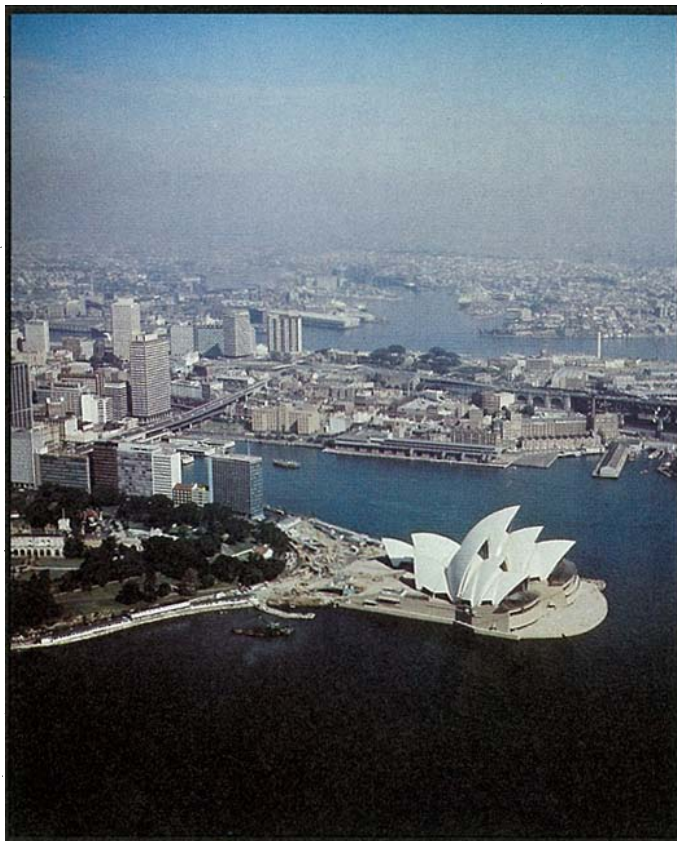


Take any big city. On a sunny still morning, the chances are that an unsavoury-looking brown haze will be hovering over it. Although city dwellers know the haze well by sight, much remains to be found out about just what it is and where it comes from.

Dr Alan McKenzie, of the atmospheric chemistry group in CSIRO's Division of Mineral Chemistry, has recently set out to find some of the answers; he is investigating the physical and chemical make-up of Sydney's haze.

Dr McKenzie is taking air samples in hazy areas and working out in the laboratory what particles are present. Measurements of the haze's light-scattering properties and nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide contents are providing additional information on its composition. So are temperature, humidity, and

What makes a brown haze?



wind measurements being made in the brown sky.

Knowledge of the haze's composition is an essential preliminary to working out what causes it. If this can be found out, it will help the New South Wales Pollution Control Commission develop the best strategy for reversing the trend towards an increasing average haze intensity year by year.

After establishing their experimental techniques in Sydney, members of the atmospheric chemistry group hope to go on to examine the haze over other Australian cities. Superficially it looks pretty similar everywhere, except for variations in intensity. However, until the investigations are carried out we won't know whether the hazes have similar compositions and causes or whether each city has its own distinct brown haze problem.