

# Air quality on agenda

BY PIIA WIRSU

AUSTRALIAN and New Zealand experts, local councils and the public will attend a three-day workshop in Deloraine next week to address the issue of air pollution.

Wood smoke continues to be a key pollutant in Tasmania, most often from bushfires, planned burns and wood heaters.

Senior Environmental Officer, Air at Tasmania's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Dr John Innis, said data shows that most Tasmanians exposure to smoke is from wood heaters. "On a cold winter's night when you want a wood heater is often when the smoke doesn't disperse because it's calm and we get temperature inversions that traps the smoke, so we have a smoke source right where people are living," said Dr Innis.

Advances in technology have seen an improvement in the monitoring of smoke in the last few years, expanding the number of stations from 2 to 34 statewide, which helps to develop better ad-

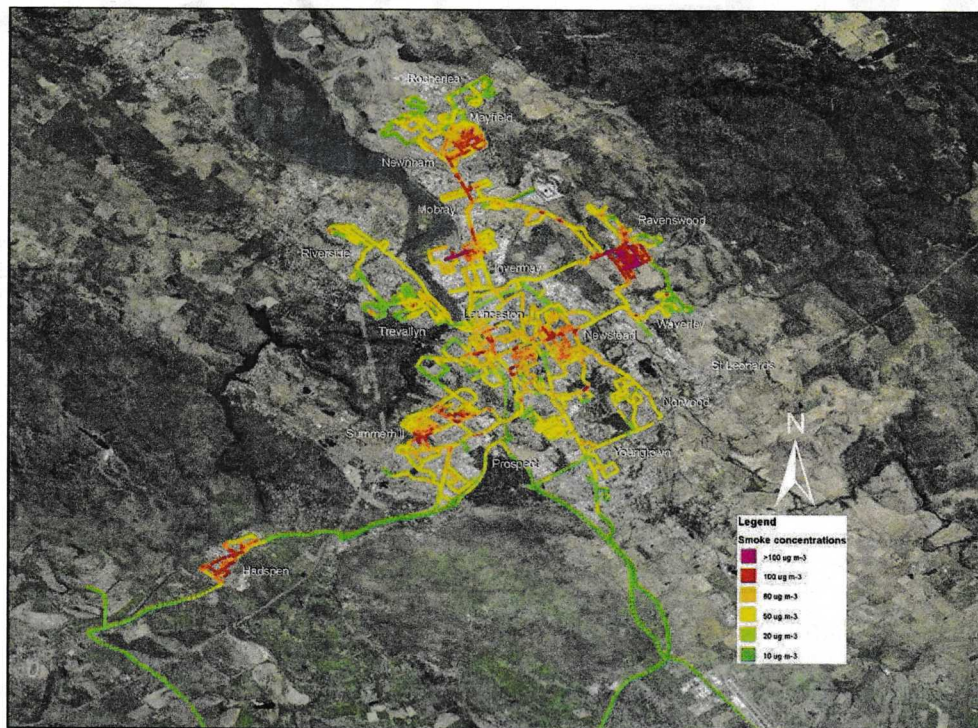
vice for the community and policy makers when tackling the issue.

The development of a mobile monitoring device has also seen improvement in the detail and real world application of air quality data. The device works alongside a GPS and provides real time data on air quality as it is driven around an area.

Organisations such as the Department of Health and the Asthma Foundation take feeds of the real-time data to provide timely advice for the community.

While data from traditional static monitoring stations is assumed to be representative of the area it is in, it fails to account for local topography, weather and differing population densities. The mobile device, however, forms a map of the entire area, clearly showing particular trouble spots.

"In the past we've tended to think of Launceston as the area where winter time air quality is poor... but we are finding some of the smaller towns, for example Perth or Longford or Hadspen, can actually have poorer air



**DEVELOPMENT:** Real time data from a new mobile air-monitoring device provides maps of pollution hot-spots in the north. **Picture:** EPA Tasmania

quality than launceston," said Dr Innis.

It is hoped the workshop will result in a pooling of knowledge and experience, which can be drawn on to develop and implement more effective management and mitigation.

Dr Innis said a key part of

the EPA's program to mitigate pollution from wood smoke was education. The workshop will include a public talk to inform people on the correct usage of a wood heater to reduce smoke.

The number of wood heaters in Launceston has decreased following council

initiatives to minimise their use, such as a wood heater buy back scheme and new building regulations reducing the need for heaters in homes. But pollution continues to be a problem in the area, with a smokey pallor hanging over the valley on cold nights.