

Mr Garry Stannus

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Minister for Energy and Resources

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Dear Mr Stannus

Thank you for your e-mail to the Minister for Economic Development and Tourism, Paula Wriedt MP regarding forestry burnoffs. As the Minister responsible for forestry I am replying on her behalf.

Public land managers in Tasmania are faced with many challenges in relation to balancing the diverse set of values that the community places on the land. These values are sometimes in conflict with one another, and so land managers must decide how they will try to achieve an acceptable balance of these values. Such is the case with removing organic fuels from the landscape.

Whether trying to manage summer wildfire or conduct autumn control burns in a safe and effective manner, it is the broader concerns and demands of the community that are the basis for this activity.

Fuel-reduction burns are done to create corridors of low-fuel levels that will increase our ability to protect natural and man-made assets against wildfires. Forest regeneration burns are conducted to stimulate the regrowth of a forest following harvest by mimicking the high-intensity fires that are a natural part of Tasmania's ecosystem. These forests can then continue to produce a sustainable supply of wood that is used to build homes and furniture, to make plywood and paper, and many other products that consumers demand every day, while providing jobs across the State.

These are some of the values that must be considered against the nuisance of smoke that is created by such burns. The Government of Tasmania has mandated that its agencies must apply the best available smoke-modelling technology when conducting burns to minimise the impact of smoke on people and communities.

During the planning stage of controlled burns a smoke dispersion model from the Bureau of Meteorology is used to predict the spread of smoke arising from burning. Burns are postponed if the model suggests that smoke from the burn will be directed at low altitude towards communities. In addition, fuel moisture monitoring equipment must show that moisture levels are low enough to maximise combustion and fire intensity and minimise smoke production, and high enough in the surrounding forest to prevent the spread of the fire.

The Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy published by the Environment Division of the Department of Environment Parks Heritage and the Arts in June 2006 and available at www.environment.tas.gov.au/anw_aq_tasmanian_air_quality_strategy.html shows that only 3% of the health affecting PM10 solid particles in the Tasmanian

atmosphere are produced by all of the wildfires, fuel reduction and regeneration burning undertaken in the state. The major sources of health affecting particulates are:

- domestic solid fuel burning (41%),
- industrial outputs (31%), and,
- paved and unpaved roads (19%)

(Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006, page 28)

The smoke columns arising from high intensity regeneration burns typically reach heights of 2000–3000 meters and are carried away without the particles returning to the ground.

Science tells us that fire (and smoke) have always been and will always be a part of Tasmania's forest ecology. We believe that it is in the best interests of Tasmanians to use fire to maintain the natural ecology while protecting human values – values that include protecting our communities from large-scale bushfires and ensuring a sustainable supply of timber.

The government will continue to work with the forest industry, indeed with all land managers, including farmers to ensure that the best available information and techniques are applied in necessary rural burning to minimise community impacts.

The burns to be conducted by the forest industry are displayed each day on the Tasmanian forest industry's planned burns website www.plannedburnstas.com.au. Attached is an explanatory brochure, which has been prepared for your information.

I hope this addresses your concerns about the forest regeneration process.

Yours sincerely

David Llewellyn MP
MINISTER

Office of Hon. David Llewellyn MP
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Minister for Energy and Resources

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