

Outback dust blows over state

BY ALISON ANDREWS from the Examiner Newspaper

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DUST FROM the Australian outback's Simpson Desert blanketed large parts of Tasmania last weekend.

The state's Environment Protection Authority director Warren Jones said yesterday that during Saturday and Sunday its baseline air monitoring network detected significant levels of Simpson Desert dust particles in the air.

"The elevated readings were present in air station data from the North and South of the state from the early hours of Saturday," Mr Jones said.

"The instrument readings indicated that the particles were too big to be from smoke.

"A large and well-defined peak in the signals occurred on Saturday around 9pm in Launceston and about an hour later in Hobart."

Mr Jones said that air stations at George Town and Rowella also detected the event as well as five blanket air stations in the North- East.

The NSW Environment and Climate Change Department's DustWatch team told Tasmanian EPA officers that a large dust storm from the Simpson Desert injected a significant amount of dust into the atmosphere that was carried south to the ocean and then east to Tasmania and into the Tasman Sea.

At the same time, the Hobart Bureau of Meteorology reported "very strong upper level north- westerly winds reaching a peak of more than 160 kilometres an hour at 9pm on Saturday".

The blanket monitoring network was established primarily to monitor smoke from planned burns and woodheaters but it also has the capacity to monitor and track particle pollution from other sources including dust and smoke from interstate, Mr Jones said.

[Monitoring station data for the 12/9/2009](#)