

21st June 2008

Dr. Roscoe Taylor

Director of Public Health
Department of Health and Human Services
GPO Box 125
Hobart
Tasmania. 7001

Dear Sir,

Forestry Planned Burn Smoke Inhalation in Tasmania.

Thank you for your letter of the 17th inst.

Please accept my apologies if I have not made myself clear in my previous letters to you. The smoke I am referring to which has made me, and so many other Tasmanian's so ill, is the forest industries planned burn smoke; not "bushfire smoke" that you refer to.

DHHS has no regulatory controls over forestry planned burns

It is interesting to learn as the Director of Public Health from the Department of Health and Human Services, and Public and Environmental Health Service, you do not have any regulatory controls over planned burning activities including forestry burn-offs in this State. How then can you claim on your Public and Environmental Health Service web site, "*Our role is to monitor the health of the Tasmanian population, and put in place programs to protect or promote health.*"

Clearly, by the evidence before you, you have not put in place in recent times any programs to protect my health, or anybody else's for that matter, when it comes to planned burn smoke.

My question to you is; when are you going to fulfill your role to protect my health from forestry planned burn smoke?

Dept of Environment and Forest Practices Authority – Smoke Management a joke.

It is also abundantly clear that you do not have a grasp of the seriousness of forestry planned burn smoke inhalation, when you claim the Tasmanian Department of Environment, P, H & A's Air Quality Strategy, and the Forest Practices Authority are playing [their] part in smoke management issues, when it is a fact that Tasmania has been extensively smoked out for years now with planned burn smoke.

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DHHS plays “vital” role.

It is good to see that the Director of Public Health is doing something, albeit the simplest of tasks like keeping a register of complaints and updating your website. I am sure this is of little benefit to people without internet access.

Are you adding to your register, complaints that come from all sources, e.g., journalists, newspapers, radio, TV, etc., in this State, throughout Australia and from overseas, and not just from those who have been well enough, or had the time to attend DHHS offices or to phone you to complain?

Forestry planned burn smoke is a public health risk and the Department’s role is to protect the community’s health from it. To fail to do so, I believe, is a breach of duty of care and negligence.

Information Sheet

You acknowledge the information sheet “*Smoke from Bushfires and Planned Burning*” was produced by the Public and Environmental Health Service.

At no time did I suggest you, “...amend the document to reflect you as the authors.”

As outlined to you previously, almost every point contained in that document has failed to minimise the effects of planned burn smoke on me. Therefore the material contained in that document does not meet the claims made by you, i.e. “to avoid or reduce health impacts...” In my case it led to additional serious health issues.

Evidence in support of this has been provided to you previously:-

- i) I spent, “...time indoors with windows and doors closed.”
- ii) I, “...minimized the amount of vigorous physical activity outdoors.”
- iii) I, “...avoided other sources of pollution as much as possible.”
- iv) I, “...was unable to go to a community building...” because I do not know of any community building that has *absolute filters* fitted which are necessary to remove these high levels of forestry wood smoke. To advise people to go to these buildings is, I believe, wrong under the circumstances.
Even if there was somewhere suitable, could they have accommodated me full time for the last two months?
- v) My chronic airflow limitation as a result of the forestry smoke, “made it harder for me to breathe” in a “P2 respirator.”
- vi) It is almost impossible to air proof a house and I have had, “...to live with a lot of smoke from outside getting in.”
- vii) I did, “...not get better and sought medical advice.” and on four occasions was admitted to Accident and Emergency and I am still not better.

The impact on my health from forestry planned burn smoke was not reduced as you claim in the information sheet, and in your letter to me dated 17/6/2008.

I believe, this document contains misleading health advice and should immediately be removed from the public arena and suitable health warnings provided in the media for those who have already received it.

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Long term research program.

Smoke inhalation from forestry burn offs has been going on for a long time in Tasmania and the health effects are becoming evident.

Interestingly, you have just commenced a long term research program into wood smoke when planned burn smoke should have ended. You have had years to complete any studies.

Tasmanian's should not be exposed to this public health risk any longer just to satisfy a \$440,000 research project. With the amount of literature available, it would be highly unlikely the findings will be any different to other smoke studies already completed (and may even be worse) and by then the damage can not be reversed. Can you please supply me with details of the Terms of Reference for this project.

Other Agencies

You mention you are working together with other agencies to explore what else may be done to minimize public exposure to smoke from a range of sources. I would hope the "other sources" are not distracting you from the primary cause of smoke inhalation which we all know comes from planned burns.

Can you please advise when the "working together" commenced, what outcomes have been agreed upon in relation to planned burn smoke, what legislation will it be covered under and when will it be enacted? Remembering, there are other smokeless methods for the forestry industries to use instead of burning to get rid of their rubbish and to carry out regeneration.

This correspondence forms part of my previous letters to you.

I also draw your attention to my letter dated the 20/5/2008 where questions have not been addressed.

Once again thank you for your attention to these matters and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Clive M. Stott