

## Department of Health and Human Services

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File: H14311



Mr Clive M. Stott,

Dear Mr Stott

### **Complaint- Forestry Planned Burns**

Further to my letter dated 1 July 2008, I would like to provide an updated reply to your letter of 21 June which requests more details about the role of the Department of Health and Human Services in relation to planned burning. My reply is based in part on contact that you have had with Dr Bicevskis, one of our Senior Medical Officers.

Firstly, I have taken on board some comments you made about the adequacy of the Bushfire Smoke Fact Sheet. The following sentence will be added to the Fact Sheet (at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph) on the web site when it is next revised:

"Action should be taken by others where possible to minimise exposure of the public to smoke".

The Fact Sheet now indicates more specifically its limitations in dealing with the broader aspects of smoke exposure health effects.

Secondly, I note that you are finalising a detailed statement regarding your health experiences after being exposed to smoke from planned burning earlier this year. Dr Bicevskis, to whom you gave permission to view your relevant medical records at the Launceston General Hospital, can confirm the dates of your recent presentations at the hospital and their general nature. When you forward the final version of your statement, to me, it will be added to the file of others who have had health effects of exposure to smoke. This file will be useful when raising the health effects of smoke with other agencies that have a more direct regulatory role in smoke management.

Thirdly, there has been a pleasing recent development in this regard. I have previously made representations to the Forest Practices Advisory Council requesting input into a forthcoming review of guidelines on forest burning. I understand that trial guidelines have been in place for this year's burning season, and that there is an intention for amended guidelines to be made compulsory next year.

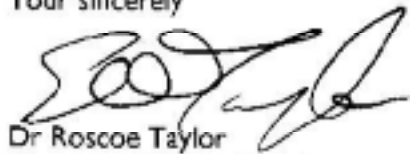
The Chief Forest Practices Officer has recently informed me that he would very much welcome my input into this review process. This is particularly pleasing because the Forest Practices Authority would seem the agency that has the most direct regulatory role in forestry matters.

Recently I made a presentation about pesticides in water at a Forest Practices Authority seminar on stream management. I was pleased with the prominence that health issues were given at this seminar. Consequently I am encouraged that the forthcoming review of forest burning practices will give health issues similar prominence.

The individuals, like you, who have contacted me to report health effects, will have helped add weight to the health case that will be put at the review of the forest burning guidelines.

Your interest in this important health issue is appreciated.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roscoe Taylor', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Roscoe Taylor  
Director of Public Health

3 September 2008