

Department of Health and Human Services

Public and Environmental Health Service
GPO Box 125, Hobart, Tas 7001
Phone (03) 6233 3185 Fax (03) 6233 4021
Web www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

Contact: S. Burton
Phone: (03) 6222 7707
Facsimile: (03) 6222 7407
E-mail: scott.burton@dhhs.tas.gov.au
File: H14311

Mrs Jan Greig

Dear Mrs Greig

Thank you for your letter dated 14 July 2008 in which you have raised a number of concerns in relation to the impact of re-generation burns on the state of your general health.

Although the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has no regulatory controls over planned burning activities including forestry burn offs, we have been liaising with relevant agencies to explore what may be done to minimize public exposure to smoke from a range of sources including forestry.

We understand that the Forest Practices Authority's Forestry Practices Advisory Council (FPAC) is to undertake a review of the guidelines for the planning and conduct of forest regeneration burns, so as to minimize the risk of smoke effects over populated areas. The aim of the FPAC is to introduce mandatory requirements for the planning and conduct of burns by accredited officers before the 2009 burning season.

I can also advise you that the Department of Environment, Parks Heritage and Arts (DEPHA) has published an Air Quality Strategy which includes a section on smoke management from planned burning. We understand that the Environment Protection Authority is working with the FPA to incorporate smoke management procedures into the Forest Practices Code.

DHHS does maintain a register of all public complaints which relate to forestry burn offs and also provides updated information on minimizing the health effects of bushfire smoke exposure on our public website.

Our department has also sponsored a longer term research project at the University of Tasmania which is being led by Professor David Bowman and Dr Fay Johnstone. The study will attempt to examine the relationship between levels of smoke exposure from planned burning and associated health effects.

So in fact DHHS has been working together with the above-mentioned agencies to achieve best practice principles for smoke management in the future that take account of the health and amenity impacts of smoke on individuals and the community.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Dr Roscoe Taylor
Director of Public Health

6th August 2008