

From: <warren.jones@environment.tas.gov.au>
To: cleanair@cleanairtas.com
Wed, 22 Apr 2009 10:23:43 +1000

Dear Mr Stott

Thank you for your email dated 11th April 2009 relating to your smoke complaint on the 3rd April 2009 and the associated photographs. Your complaint on the 3rd April 2009 was logged on our Complaints and Incident Response database, and an officer representing the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) followed up your complaint with queries to the Forest Practices Authority (FPA), Launceston City Council and West Tamar Council, and by reviewing the Planned Burns website (http://www.plannedburnstas.com.au/planned_burns.html) in order to identify the source of the smoke.

As indicated to you by the FPA, the FPA also confirmed to my officer that there were no forestry burns undertaken in the Tamar region on the 3rd April. The nearest forestry burn conducted on that day was in the NW of the State, in Surrey Hills. According to the Bureau of Meteorology records, the prevailing wind directions on the 3rd April were from the WNW to NW.

Launceston City Council and West Tamar Council indicated that they had no record of any other planned burns being undertaken in the region. There was however a large and illegal fire caused by burning tyres in Launceston on the 3rd April, which officers from the Launceston City Council indicated was creating a large volume of smoke across Launceston. The Council is carrying out an investigation into this fire and the EPA has offered assistance if required.

My officers in the northern offices in Launceston were also contacted to obtain their observations. They indicated that whilst there was some high level smoke in the area on the days around the 3rd April, their observations did not indicate a blanketing of the area. Both the PM 10 and the 'indicative' PM2.5 data from the Launceston air monitoring station indicated an increase around the middle of the day to mid afternoon on the 3rd April but the 24 hour standard (as determined under the National Environment Protection Measure for Ambient Air Quality) was not breached.

I understand that two other officers representing the Environment Protection Authority (John Dobson and Bob Hyde) called you to discuss the complaint and issues of smoke management. I appreciate and understand that smoke from planned burns is a concern for the community in areas impacted by smoke. In order to address improved smoke management from planned burns, the EPA is working with the FPA on the implementation of a coordinated Smoke Management Strategy. For a trial period during the 2009 burn season, planned burns are being undertaken as part of this Strategy and in accordance with new Smoke Management Guidelines that have been released.

The Smoke Management Guidelines provide for improved planning of smoke dispersal using data and models developed by the Bureau of Meteorology. When the Smoke Management Guidelines predict poor smoke dispersal, restrictions will be imposed as required to ban or limit the number of burns. In this way, the Strategy should involve the coordination of planned burns to minimise the risk of high concentrations of smoke

within individual air sheds. Whilst I appreciate that you may have been impacted by smoke in the Tamar Valley on that day, the information from the FPA indicates that there were no breaches of those Guidelines.

Please also note that the EPA is presently engaged in the process of commissioning a network of up to 15 low-cost air quality monitoring stations across the state. These stations will operate year round providing data on smoke from planned burns, winter-time smoke from domestic heating and smoke from bushfires. The data collected from the network will be published in near real-time on the Environment Division website (<http://www.environment.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=2809>). This information will assist in the improved management of smoke from planned burns as well as being a valuable public information tool.

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