

New Air Quality Monitoring Station Up and Running

13 May 2009

The first in a series of new air quality monitoring stations in regional Tasmania has started operating in the state's north east. The Minister for Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts Michelle O'Byrne today inspected air monitoring equipment recently installed near Lilydale. The station is the first of 15 being installed across a wide area of the state from Burnie in the north-west through to Geeveston in the south, in areas historically affected by smoke from planned burns operations. The new monitoring system is being implemented by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and is known as BLANKET- the Base-Line Air Network of EPA Tasmania. EPA Chair John Ramsay said the real-time air quality readings are a valuable public information tool. "This new network will help the EPA and the State Government to assess the success of measures that are being put in place to better manage planned burning and reduce the potential impacts on the community - such as the Forest Practices Authority's new coordinated smoke management system". BLANKET will increase the coverage of air quality measurements in Tasmania, in particular for the purpose of monitoring smoke produced by planned burns. The stations will also help measure the effects of particles from other sources, for example wood heaters, on air quality in regional centres. While the exact locations of some of the BLANKET stations are yet to be finalised, up to seven will be located in the north and north east. There will also be seven stations in the Derwent and Huon Valleys and one in the Burnie region. Under BLANKET, all stations will provide real time updates every ten to fifteen minutes. Graphs of the indicative air quality readings on particulate data will then be posted every thirty minutes on the Environment Division website. The Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy's primary focus is the achievement of National Environment Protection Goals for air quality, especially those relating to the fine particulate pollution that impacts on areas of the state. Ms O'Byrne congratulated the EPA for the move to implement BLANKET as part of the commitment toward improving air quality in Tasmania. Background The EPA in Tasmania currently monitors PM10 and PM2.5 air quality levels at Launceston, Hobart, Rowella and George Town. Monitoring will commence at Devonport this year. Visit www.environment.tas.gov.au and follow the links "air, noise and water" and "air quality" and "monitoring air pollution" to find unvalidated air quality readings for the previous day in Hobart, Launceston and Rowella as well as background information about particulate material including PM2.5 and PM10.



John Innis from the Environment Division explains to journalists how the new station will operate while Environment Division Scientific and Technical Manager Coleen Cole looks on.



Mark Hyland, John Innis and Tony Graham.



Tony Graham in front of the new station at Lilydale.



John Innis and Minister Michelle O'Byrne answer media questions about the new BLANKET air Monitoring network.