

OUR REF: DA/da

15 May 2008

Dear Mr Stott,

Thank you for your letter of 15 May following up your letters forwarded to by Jodie Campbell on 24 April and the subsequent phone calls expressing concerns about the amount of smoke in the air due to recent burn offs. I understand your concern and appreciate that the smoke has raised health concerns for many people, particularly those with respiratory problems.

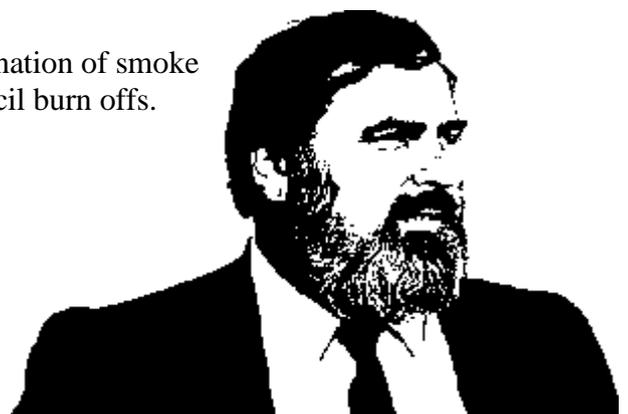
The Environment Division of the State Government monitors airborne particle levels and has monitoring stations in Hobart, Launceston and on the North West Coast. These stations take very detailed readings of particulates in the air, which are then sent off for further analysis.

Recently Warren Jones, the Director of Environmental Management, said that data from both Hobart and Launceston has shown elevated levels of particles, although these do not appear to have breached the National Environment Protection Measure Standard. However there have been days when the readings have been approaching the standard.

The Forest Practices Authority has a draft Smoke Management Standard, which is currently being trialed, and investigations have begun looking into other ways to specifically monitor the smoke from planned burning more comprehensively. The Environmental Management and Pollution Control Board recently approved a \$25000 grant under the Environmental Protection Fund. This funding will conduct research into monitoring of smoke from planned burning in Tasmania, in a bid to help with smoke management.

Under the Act, penalties can be applied to people or organisations who breach the National Environment Protection Measure Standard, however, when there are a number of individuals and groups conducting burn offs at the same time, it is hard to prosecute as it is hard to prove who is producing the smoke.

The recent smoke we have all been subjected to is a combination of smoke from private land owners, domestic fires, forestry and council burn offs.



As unpleasant as it is, it is necessary to conduct burn offs, not only for the regeneration of bush land, but also to remove excess fuel and help prevent bushfires in the summer. Autumn is the best time to conduct these burns as the weather is usually quite settled. The unusual amount of smoke we currently have to deal with is partly the result of an unusual weather pattern that has seen very little wind to help disperse the smoke.

Burns are also required to develop land to replant eucalypts because they require a clear ash seed bed to regenerate efficiently. These are covered again by the Forest Practices Code and are subject to scrutiny by the National Environment Protection Measure Standard too.

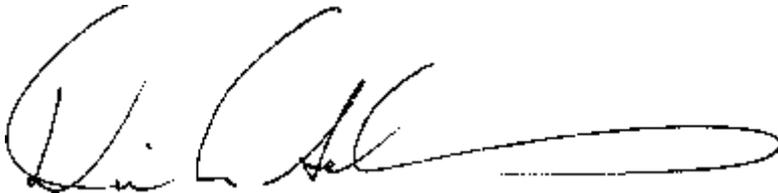
A lot of the smoke is from domestic fire places at this time of year too, and although they are subject to environmental regulations, they are not as easy to police as they are more difficult to prove if they are over the particulate level.

Smoke is and has been part of the Tasmanian winter landscape and has been for two centuries. It is certainly no different this year than any other year but when the air is still it is more noticeable.

I have spoken to Michelle O'Byrne's office and she has provided an advice sheet from the Department of Health and Human Services has issued a summary sheet on smoke from planned burning and bushfires, I have attached a copy for your use and I hope you can minimize the effect on your health.

I hope this information is of use to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Adams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

DICK ADAMS  
Federal Member for Lyons