

11/11/2009 – Clive Stott's Meeting with the EPA Board in Launceston.
Launceston Council building at 1410 hrs.

Air Quality Monitoring

Thank you for this opportunity to address the board.

As the time allocated is just 15 minutes, could the Board please take these matters on notice and respond to me in writing at your earliest convenience.

a) Are you aware of how my health has been seriously affected by poor air quality in this state while the EPA has been in operation?

b) What is the principal Act governing air quality in Tasmania that the EPA is bound by?

The Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 (EMPCA) is the **primary environment protection legislation in Tasmania**. The fundamental basis of EMPCA is the **prevention, reduction and remediation of environmental harm**.

"any adverse effect on the environment (of whatever degree or duration) and includes an environmental nuisance" (the latter is defined as 'the emission of a pollutant that unreasonably interferes with, or is likely to interfere with, a person's enjoyment of the environment')."

c) This is not being complied with. Please explain why?

d) Are members of the EPA Board concerned at all with the setting up of an Ethics Commission in Tasmania?

e) Which state Minister is in charge of air quality in Tasmania?

f) Why has the BLANKET air monitoring installation not been completed and reporting in real time to the public? This was promised back in May 2009.

The readings from our installed stations do not match up with what is actually happening at locations in the north of the state with regards to particulate matter. They by no means match up with the widely recognised Visual Air Quality method used to determine air quality. Using the VAC method we had days classified as 'dangerous' or 'harmful' to people's health this year, but this never translated to readings from our installed stations.

g) Could there be calibration problems with the instruments?

h) Are you able to provide to me the detailed methods/procedure used to calibrate the instruments in use?

i) Do you think it is reasonable that individuals or communities should have to install their own air monitoring equipment in Tasmania as a result of these 'questionable' readings?

j) When will the outstanding eleven or so other monitors be installed and reporting?

k) Does the EPA think it is good enough to announce there will be planned smoke about for many months of the year and that people just have to try and manage their lives the best way they can, even if this might mean being hospitalized or having to attend doctors and be put on life saving medication or equipment?

(2)

l) There have been recorded times when planned burns have been lit when predicted wind directions have been towards populated areas. Were these breaches of interest to the EPA; what action did the EPA take to protect population health?

m) There is a 'dedicated compliance unit' within Environment? Can you tell me more about this in connection to our air quality?

n) Are any persons or industries in the state, exempt from creating air pollution that causes harm from their activities to other's health, eg, smoke?

o) Can I apply to the EPA tribunal for an enforcement order if I believe my health is being, or has been, affected by poor air quality, no matter who is responsible at the source?

Section 50 (1)A person who causes serious environmental harm by polluting the environment intentionally or recklessly and with knowledge that serious environmental harm will or might result is guilty of an offence.

p) Seeing the north of the state has been covered in smoke for many months of the year for many years now, how many prosecutions have there been for air quality breaches over the last five years?

q) Does the EPA think it is good enough just to have burners notify neighbours of planned burns when PM10 particle pollution can remain in the air from hours to days and travel up to 100Km, and that the more harmful PM2.5's can stop in the air from days to weeks and travel 1000Km +?

For this reason, any Combined Smoke Strategy should apply to all sources of smoke in the state. It should not be handed over to the forest industries to monitor themselves when and how they see fit, with whom they want on any advisory committee.

r) If we take the EPA to be responsible for what its name implies, i.e., environment protection; will the EPA/Environment now put in place a whole-of-state smoke monitoring strategy that runs for the full twelve months of the year? When?

s) When recognized health studies from around the world link particulate matter to severe health conditions and many deaths, does the EPA believe they acted appropriately by handing over self regulation to our smoky forest industries which enables them now to burn when they like, and then to investigate complaints against themselves?

t) The Tamar valley and surrounds have been subjected to stinking environmental smoke at unacceptable and harming levels while planned burns have been taking place and when domestic wood heaters are not being used. These events have been documented. Why won't the EPA act?

u) Will the minutes of this meeting, together with my questions, be put on record and made available through the EPA website?

Thank you.