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From: "Lyons, Geoff (Sen H. Polley)" <Geoff.Lyons@aph.gov.au>
To: <cleanair@cleanairtas.com>
Sent: Friday, 18 December 2009 9:39 AM
Subject: Planned Burns
Clive

Please find enclosed letter from the Minister for Environment, Parks & Heritage.

In response to Senator Polley's letter.

Cheers

Geoff Lyons

Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage
Minister for Tourism and the Arts
Minister for Sport and Recreation

10 DEC 2009

GRL



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- 7 DEC 2009

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Senator Helen Polley
Electorate Office
69 Margaret Street
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Dear Senator Polley

Thank you for your letter, received on 15 October 2009, in which you refer to your contact with a constituent in relation to pollution caused by planned forestry burns. You enclosed a copy of your constituent's letter dated 7 October 2009, and requested information that may be of use in your reply.

I assure you that I share your constituent's public health concerns and those of the Launceston community at large in relation to smoke, whether it is from planned burns, wood heaters or any other source. I am also aware that Launceston and its environs are particularly susceptible to build up in smoke levels, especially in winter, when cold calm weather conditions are associated with temperature inversions in the Tamar Valley preventing the dispersion of smoke.

In relation to the issue of smoke from planned burns and its health impacts on the Launceston community and other communities around Tasmania, the Government's approach is guided by the principles of the *Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality) 2004 (Air Policy)* and the objectives of the *Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006*. In short, the Government's aim is to ensure that smoke from all types of planned burns is managed in accordance with best practice and that smoke is reduced to the lowest practical level consistent with the need to conduct burns. I acknowledge however, the particular significance of forestry planned burning, as the forest industry is responsible for around two thirds of planned burns in autumn, when there is most concern about smoke impacts.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is working towards its objectives in relation to reducing the impacts of planned burning through its participation in a working group on smoke management formed by the Forestry Practices Advisory Council. Other agencies represented on this working group include the Forestry Practices Authority (FPA), Forestry Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service the Department of Health and Human Services and representatives of the forestry industry. A major objective of the EPA's participation in this group is to ensure that the principles of the Air Policy are reflected in proposed amendments to the Forest

Practices Code 2000 which will, in the future, enable the enforcement of best practice smoke management through the forest practices regulatory system.

An important initiative of the FPA is the development of the Coordinated Smoke Management Strategy (CSMS) which was trialled in the 2009 planned burning season. The strategy provides for the coordination of planned burns to minimise the risk of high smoke levels in individual airsheds and imposes restrictions to limit the number and size of burns on days when weather forecasts predict poor smoke dispersal. It also requires improved training and the accreditation of personnel involved in the planning and conduct of burns. A review of the outcomes of the first year's operation of the CSMS is presently underway. It is being undertaken by an independent consultant and will include recommendations for further improvements if required.

To facilitate the assessment of the smoke management measures implemented under the CSMS the establishment of air quality monitoring stations, in addition to those already in place at major population centres, was also proposed. To this end, officers supporting the EPA are currently in the process of establishing a pilot air quality monitoring network called BLANKET (*Base-Line Air Network for the Environment of Tasmania*). The network will consist of up to 15 automatic stations located in areas likely to be subject to smoke from planned burns. Air quality data from these stations will be reported in near real-time to the Environment Division's publicly accessible website. The first five stations were deployed in May 2009 and it is expected that the network will be fully implemented before the 2010 autumn burning season. Monitoring data collected from BLANKET will contribute to our better understanding of the generation, movement and dispersal of smoke from planned burns in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government remains committed to improving air quality in Launceston and across Tasmania. It will continue to be guided in its approach by the principles of the Air Policy and the objectives of the *Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006*.

If you require further clarification on any of the matters discussed above you are welcome to contact the Air Specialist at the Environment Division on 6233 6206.

Yours sincerely



Michelle O'Byrne MP
Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage