

Department of Health and Human Services

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

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Mr. Clive M Stott

Dear Mr Stott

Complaint --Forestry Planned Burns

Thank you for your letters dated 20 May and 13 June 2008 regarding the above, in which you have raised a number of concerns in relation to the impact of forestry re-generation burns on your general state of health.

In regard to bushfire smoke, I wish to advise you that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) currently has no regulatory controls over planned burning activities including forestry burn-offs. However, the Tasmanian Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and Arts has published an Air Quality Strategy, which includes a section on smoke management from planned burning. In addition the Forest Practices Authority also plays a role in smoke management issues.

DHHS does maintain a register of all public complaints which relate to forestry burn-offs, and as you are aware, also provides updated information on minimising the health effects of bush fire smoke exposure on our public website. The information sheet headed "*Smoke from Bushfires and from Planned Burning*" was developed by our Public and Environmental Health Service. In due course and as you suggested, we will amend the document to reflect us as the authors.

We are sorry to hear about the ill-effects you experienced from exposure to bush smoke recently however the advice we provide in our information sheet is restricted to how to 'avoid and reduce health impacts' as we have no regulatory control over the burn-offs.

However, we are sponsoring a long term research project at the University of Tasmania, which will be undertaken by Professor David Bowman and Dr Fay Johnstone. The study will attempt to examine the relationship between levels of smoke exposure from planned burning and associated health effects.

In addition, we are working together with the above-mentioned agencies to explore what else may be done to minimise public exposure to smoke from a range of sources.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Dr Roscoe Taylor
Director of Public Health

17 June 2008