**Wednesday 29 August 2007 - Part 1 - Pages 1 – 33**

 PULP MILL PERMIT

**Resumed from 28 August 2007 (page 85)**

  11.05 a.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - I rise to make a contribution to this debate in what is possibly to be the biggest decision I will be called upon to make in this place.  It is certainly the biggest decision thus far and no-one knows what will come before us in the future.  I personally hope we do not find ourselves in a similar situation again where what should have been a thorough independent, rigorous and transparent assessment process actually fails and we see ourselves doing this sort of thing again.

Mr President, I found this a very difficult decision to make in many ways as during this debate and the entire assessment process highly qualified experts have presented expert views and advice that at times have been poles apart.  We have also heard what I would consider convincing evidence that this pulp mill will, if it is successful, be one of the most modern pulp mills in the world and that it will be used as a benchmark for future pulp mills around the world as well.  There are, though, a number of areas that have been raised during the many briefings from both those in support of the project and those opposed that have to be considered when making my decision.

What I need to decide is whether this assessment process has delivered the results I believe are necessary in the interests of Tasmania to tick off on all the issues that have been identified through the assessment process before us and whether this pulp mill will meet the guidelines established through the RPDC process.  My contribution will include some technical information as this is a highly technical proposal.  For me to form a considered opinion and make an informed decision on this matter it has been imperative I undertook this level of investigation.  I make no apology for the technical detail and, perhaps in some people's minds, boring detail.

At the outset I wish to confirm some of the statements I have made at other times and views I have regarding the importance of the forest industry and downstream processing and the importance that has to our State.  I have been and continue to be a supporter of sustainable forestry industry, particularly downstream processing.  I have also been and continue to be a strong supporter of sustainable development in Tasmania and I firmly believe that new development is crucial for Tasmania's ongoing economic future, particularly if we are to continue to experience the economic growth and opportunities that Tasmania needs and deserves.  Sustainable development must be encouraged, welcomed and facilitated.

However, any development must not come at any cost.  It must be appropriate and sustainable.  It must be development that will positively enhance our State, provide opportunities for our youth and encourage investors to seriously consider Tasmania as *the* place to invest.  If this is to be the case we need to ensure we have an appropriate, independent, robust and rigorous assessment process that can assess projects in a timely manner.  Such a process must provide developers with a level of certainty about the process, including a reasonable time frame.  Without this, potential and current developers will be less inclined to approach Tasmania as a location for development.  We do not need to see developers continually frustrated by red tape and delays that may not be of their making.  In saying that, I am not suggesting that some of the delays in the RPDC process were not of the proponent's making in this case or that the RPDC cannot fulfil the necessary assessment role in the future, but clearly on this occasion that process failed.

That must be looked at as a matter of urgency to ensure inappropriate government interference does not occur in any future development assessment processes and an appropriate assessment process is re-established to avoid a situation such as this in the future.  That is a debate for another day.  I believe there is as much, if not more, opposition to the process under which this proposal has been managed and the appalling way this Government has acted and interfered in the assessment process during this whole sorry saga.  There have been many examples of and much public debate regarding the inappropriate interference and actions of government in this process.  That has completely undermined the assessment process and destroyed public confidence in the entire process.  Even people who are fully and unequivocally in support of building a pulp mill have very little, if any, confidence in the process that is before us at this time from my reading of the e-mails and correspondence I have received.  One example that I found particularly appalling was the way the Leader stated on the release of the SWECO PIC report that the report provided all the information needed for anyone to accept that this proposed pulp mill would meet all the guidelines and requirements.  During *Friday* *Forum* on ABC Radio the question was asked of the Leader about where we should go now.  The SWECO PIC report had been tabled that week and the Leader stated:

'the Government's done all its homework on this.  I mean, the reports that have been produced are now in the public domain, that have examined all of the RPDC guidelines in relation to this project.  That's the homework.  The homework's been done.'

Mr President, this comment was made without even seeing or knowing in any way, shape or form the permits and conditions that will be developed by the regulatory bodies.  These permits and conditions have only been available to us, as the final decision-makers, since last Tuesday.  I suggest that actually seeing and understanding these permits and conditions would be essential before making a statement such as that.

**Mr Parkinson** - You might have discussed it with me beforehand; I could have told you what information I had.

**Ms FORREST** - You did not have the permits before you.  For me, or any other decision-maker in this debate, to be confident that emission guidelines identified in the SWECO PIC report as not going to be met, possibly could be met, it would be necessary for that information to be before us.  I found the Leader's comment at the time to be misguided and potentially undermining of the work I and other independent members were doing to inform ourselves and so be in a position to make a well-informed decision based on fact, not pulp fiction.

I stated during my election campaign two-and-a-half years ago, and stand by the comment made at that time, that I support a pulp mill, provided it meets strict environmental guidelines.  The proposed mill before us is being assessed against the rigorous and high standards of the emission guidelines that were prepared through the RPDC process.  I have been personally informed by many sources on both sides of the debate that these guidelines are amongst the strictest and most rigorous in the world.

Mr President, this debate, unlike the pulp mill assessment bill debate some months ago, is about the pulp mill project.  It is no longer about the process, as the last debate was.  What we are here to do now is to debate a motion to either support or reject the pulp mill permit as described in this motion.  Whether or not any of us - I in particular - supported the previous decision to see us to this point is now irrelevant.  We must fully consider the motion and thus the pulp mill permit before us.  This permit, if accepted, would see arguably the most highly regulated industry in Tasmania and possibly the world.  Our briefings highlighted that and even the proponent has stated publicly that the conditions are so rigorous they are not sure at this time that they can be met.  Mr President, that is a matter for the proponent, not this Parliament.  I believe it should not influence our decision either way.

As a member of parliament I have been charged with the responsibility to be fully convinced that if this pulp mill is approved it will meet the established guidelines, either through the design of the mill, or where it has been identified that the mill alone will not achieve this, then through the restrictions placed on the mill through the permits and conditions.  This is now our challenge.

Mr President, members and the public will be aware that I voted in favour of the assessment process that has brought us to this place now to make the final decision as to whether this proposed pulp mill should proceed or not.  The fragmentation of the assessment process was, and continues to be, a major concern for me.  I asked at the time whether this bill, or now this assessment process, would stop an inappropriate project from going ahead, and further, whether this process would ensure that an appropriate project will have the opportunity to proceed with or without conditions.  In making my decision I did consider relevant important definitions, including definitions of accepted modern technology.  In the State policy on water quality management 1997 and the draft environment protection air quality, accepted modern technology is defined as technology that has a demonstrated capacity to achieve a desired emission concentration in a cost-effective manner, takes account of cost-effective engineering and scientific development and pursues opportunities for waste minimisation.

I fully accept that the designers, Poyry, a very highly credentialled and credible organisation with vast experience and expertise in the field, are certainly unlikely to jeopardise their credibility by providing assurances in these areas unless they are very confident.  However, with an untried technology such as that proposed in this pulp mill in some areas, such as the incinerators to improve the odour abatement, even though logically and technically it seems almost foolproof, I believe we need to trust these experts as we are informed that there is no other mill anywhere in the world with the same systems to seek clarification of the efficacy of these measures in the form that they will be in this proposal.  Best available technique is defined in Article 5 of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants as meaning the most effective and advanced stage in the development of activities and their methods of operation, which include the practical suitability of particular techniques providing in principle the basis for release limitations designed to prevent and, where it is not practical, to reduce release of chemicals listed in Part 1 of Annex C and their impact on the environment as a whole.

Techniques include both technology used and the way in which installations are designed, built, maintained, operated and commissioned.  This is still from the same reference.  Available techniques also means techniques that are accessible to the operator and are developed on the scale that allows implementation in the relevant industrial sector under economically and technically viable conditions, taking into consideration the costs and advantages.  Best means most effective in achieving high general level of protection to the environment as a whole. When you are looking at what 'best available technology' and 'accepted modern technology' are about, it does take into account cost factors and I will come to that a bit further on.

These definitions are quite comprehensive but relate to technologies that have not had an assessment process because they have not been around long enough to be assessed.  Many experts in the relevant areas continue to raise concerns regarding the effluent from this mill and its impact on the marine environment.  However there are also a number of experts who inform me that there is no real issue of concern with the fluid effluent from the mill, that it is clean enough to drink and that in some countries effluent is pumped into the bodies of water from which drinking water is also taken.  If this is the case, why is all this fluid effluent not recycled back through the mill to support the ongoing pulping processes?  Clearly there are elements in this effluent or waste water that make this impossible.  Suggestions by the member for Huon that we could really dispense with the term 'effluent' and use 'waste water' instead does not really change anything.  If I told you I was suffering from a blood dyscrasia would you be as concerned about it as if I told you I was suffering from terminal leukemia?  At the end of the day they are the same thing and they could both kill me, but one does not sound as bad as the other because you do not really know what it is.  But they are still the same thing.

What is a concern to me and to many others, as well as being highlighted in the SWECO PIC report, is the absence of appropriate and comprehensive hydrodynamic modelling.  There should have been a commitment by government to undertake a social and economic impact assessment that considers both risks and benefits.  This did not occur, and as a result it has been quite difficult to get a clear sense of the entire proposal and be able to weigh up risks and benefits and consider what the residual impacts are.  It should be noted that impact and risks are not necessarily the same.  The impacts are often called consequences, particularly in reports prepared by consultants.  The residual consequences or residual impacts are what is left after everything has been done to mitigate the harm.  Risk, as opposed to impact, measures how likely this is to occur.  Risks and impacts are often confused in this way.  While risk can be low, due to the low probability of occurrence, the consequences can still be very high.

During a previous debate I also had representation from people who work in and rely on the forest industry and who are very much in support of a pulp mill.  But many of these people have also acknowledged that if any pulp mill is to be proposed it must meet strict environmental guidelines to ensure it is good for all Tasmanians.  In order for this proposal to get the required approval, I believe that almost all people agree that this proposal must meet the guidelines that have been established.

I also raise some concern regarding the absence of a comprehensive environmental assessment.  EIAs have an important role in informing decision-making and ensuring access to a full range of information on the consequences of a development.  This is so the facts can be corroborated and if necessary the public or other interested parties can provide their own material to support the process.  EIAs are not about making the decision, they are about informing it.  Experts in the area of environmental science and ecology have raised concerns with me that the absence of an EIA in this case undermines the process and makes it more difficult for decision-makers, in this case us, as members of this House, to make an informed decision as to whether or not the consequences are acceptable.  It has been a difficult path to get to the point to make a decision.

A robust environmental management plan is needed and must be included in the permits and conditions before us and must contain rigorous monitoring and a set of protocols that can be put in place to further offset harm if something does go wrong.  The framework for this should be quite explicitly set out in the approval and when we read through the permits that is something we will all decide - whether these permits actually do that.  I will come to that when I discuss the permits and conditions before us a little bit later.

I believe it is important to provide information about methods I have taken to inform myself during this debate and my overall assessment of the benefit of the industry to Tasmania and the proposal before us.

Mr President, when considering the issue of downstream processing, it has always been a significant concern to me and others that our valuable timber resource, a resource that has the capacity to provide significant employment and economic benefit to the State, has been sent offshore for processing in the form of woodchips when the capacity to downstream process does exist and should exist in Tasmania.  When our resource is sent offshore for processing, the jobs go offshore.  We need to keep these jobs and workers in our State.  Even though there is a low unemployment rate currently, this may not always be the case and any opportunity to increase employment opportunities and economic growth in Tasmania must be seriously considered.

We have seen some recent examples of expansion in the area of downstream processing in our timber resource, including the veneer peeler mills in the Huon Valley and, more recently, in Smithton.  Clearly all options for downstream processing should be considered and investigated, including the pulp mill.

It should be noted however that even if this proposed pulp mill does go ahead, the woodchip exports from Burnie and Triabunna will continue with very little if any reduction.  Therefore whether this mill is approved or not, other downstream processing opportunities should be investigated and hopefully supported and encouraged by the State Government as much as this project has been.  I certainly hope that any other projects that come before us are given as much attention and interest on all fronts as this one has been given.

Of course I would strongly recommend that any proposal for downstream processing in the future, regardless of what it is, should undergo an independent, open and transparent, rigorous assessment process as opposed to this process we have seen during this time.  When considering downstream processing more fully as this proposed pulp mill clearly is, some questions do need to be asked.  Is this the right downstream processing at the right time in the right place?  Whilst these questions are not necessarily an integral part of this debate, I do believe they are worth considering.

Mr President, is a pulp mill the most appropriate form of downstream processing at this stage for Tasmania?  In the current national and international economic climate, pulp and woodchip prices and supply prices are the subject of many analyses by many economists and others involved in the pulp and paper industry.  I suggest the answer to that question is anything but certain and again it depends on who you talk to.  I think we really need to consider all those opinions and eventually form our own.

Should Tasmania be actively pursuing other downstream processing opportunities, and are there other opportunities that may provide as good a return over time with less risk?  With a pulp mill of this size in a State the size of Tasmania, is this really putting all your eggs in one basket?  If there was a significant threat to the pulp market, such as through more competitive markets in other parts of the world, are we putting Tasmania at too great a risk through the size of this project as it stands?  I am not an economist or a pulp or woodchip industry expert and I do not have the answers to some of those questions but I can see that there are potential risks here and they should not be ignored.

When considering whether this is the right time for the project, many will strongly argue that it definitely is.  When considering the future of the timber industry in Tasmania, many experts suggest that it is imperative that this project goes ahead if Gunns and Forestry Tasmania, as we know them, are to survive.  However, as with all issues in this debate, there are many other experts with opinions that differ.

There have been suggestions that advances are being made and ongoing research is being done into technologies within pulp mills that will result in reduced air and liquid emissions.  The other question is, is this the right place?  There have been many suggestions from many experts and non-experts that the Tamar Valley poses challenges with the topography and meteorological aspects of this region as well as the close proximity to other industry, including tourism and wine growing.  For this reason many local residents have expressed concerns about such a big development with not only the air and potential odour emissions but also the visual impact of the mill releasing a lot of steam which will be visible for some considerable distance, particularly when the ambient air temperature in the region is low as is more often than not the case in the Tamar Valley region over the winter and certainly autumn months - pretty much all but the summer months I think you would agree.  The right place for that visual impact is also something that has not really been looked at in this debate, I believe, Mr President.  We have talked about all the emissions but how is it going to look when you are driving on the other side of the river?  How much will you see driving on the same side of the river?

When we visited a mill in Chile we arrived at about 10 in the morning and you could see a lot of steam.  All it was was steam - there was nothing harmful in the steam but the visual impact was quite significant because there was so much of it to see.  The ambient air temperature was 9 degrees so it was not unlike the Tamar Valley.  In fact I think the Tamar Valley gets colder at times.  It must, however, be remembered that the proposed site is within an established industrial area, an area that has a number of other heavy industrial activities that also have some impact on the air and visual amenity of the region.  However, it could also be argued that this is not a reason to add another development in the area if it is likely to have a negative impact on the region.  Rather we should look at reducing the impacts of existing industry and other sources of pollution in the region as well as improving the area overall.

I get a bit frustrated when people say things like 'Well, it is near an existing industrial area, there are lots of other polluting factories there, let's just bung another one in'.  What we are looking at, hopefully, is a state-of-the-art new big mill but we need to be sure that we are looking to the future, not looking to the past.  We need to be sure that any new development does meet requirements that we set now for the future and those that are already there may need to tidy up their act.  But that is not part of this debate; we are looking at this new proposal before us.

It should also be noted that in other parts of the world pulp mills are assisting in the process of cleaning up rivers by treating the effluent and sewage from neighbouring villages that currently pump raw sewage into the waterways.  Whilst I do not believe this is an issue in Tasmania and certainly not in the Tamar River, when you look at the overall potential benefits in some of those places you can understand why people are so supportive of pulp mills.  That was discussed on our trip overseas.  There is a new mill that is being built on the border between Uruguay and Argentina that is treating sewage from one of the towns that has not had a sewage treatment facility.

Turning my mind to employment in forestry, I certainly appreciate the importance of the forestry industry to the State, particularly in my electorate and that of the member for Apsley.  Forestry is a large employer in a number of areas in the State and the jobs of forestry workers are just as important as any other industry and business in Tasmania.  It is important to note that we have been informed during this debate that there will be no job losses in forestry if the pulp mill does not go ahead as the timber industry is already growing and will be harvested when mature either for a pulp mill or as export woodchips.  However, as we know, there will be an increase in jobs overall but not necessarily in forestry operations if the pulp mill proceeds.  If other downstream processing opportunities were established - and I for one would certainly hope that this is the case - we may yet see no woodchips shipped offshore for processing from Burnie or Triabunna.

The jobs in forestry operations themselves will possibly not grow significantly.  The jobs growth would occur in the other downstream processing ventures - the pulp mill will provide those opportunities rather than the forestry industry itself.  With regard to the outcome of this debate, the importance of the future of forestry workers and the forestry industry will remain.

During the time leading up to the point we are now at, a point that many members of the public feel we should not have got to at all however here we are and we must make a decision as we have been elected to do, I spent much time, energy and resources informing myself of the issues, concerns, practicalities and operations of a modern pulp mill and other relevant aspects of this debate.  The people or organisations I consulted during this time have been from varied backgrounds with quite varied views about this proposal.

[11.30 a.m.]

I want to refer to some of the people and organisations I have talked to when informing myself.  I put them into three different groups, one being the pulp mill supporters or advocates for the pulp mill, a number of pulp mill experts who have worked in the pulp and paper industry for decades both in Australia and around the world.  They have come from a variety of backgrounds within that industry and there are a great number of those people.  I also took time to visit a senior lecturer at the Pulp and Paper Institute at Monash University in Melbourne.  He gave me some very high-powered lectures.  He said I was a good student because I could not argue with him.  So, I just shut up and listened, basically.  He was very informative and it certainly helped me to really understand what pulp mills were about, how they worked, what were things that were of concern and what were not.  I also have spent time talking to the mill designers, Poyry, representatives from the forestry industry, including Timber Communities Australia and others.  I have also sought scientific opinion and I try to put the scientific opinions in the neither for nor against box, but it is still hard to separate.  I have talked to a number of water experts from a variety of backgrounds, however this approach has sometimes led to what I refer to as 'duelling PhDs', a situation I guess to be expected in some degree due to the highly emotive issue that we are looking at and the difficulty we seem to experience in any area of science getting scientists to agree.  It has been a bit of a challenge trying to sift through to what actually is the truth of the matter.  I have spoken to an ecologist at length, I have talked to air emission and air quality experts and scientists and again the conflicting opinions on this issue have been a challenge.  I have talked to medical and other health professionals, I have talked to economists.  I have also talked to those who I would consider are the opposing voices of this proposal.  They include members of the Wilderness Society and other environmental groups, the Surfrider Foundation, and local tourism operators and vineyards.  I put those people in that group, not because they are a lobby group that are totally opposed to the mill but because they have voiced a lot of concern and they tend to be opposed because their concerns have not really been met.

Also in that group I place residents of the region with concerns in a number of areas, including air and water emissions, road traffic, health impacts and water usage, to name a few.  There are others who have petitioned me on a number of fronts, both in support of the pulp mill and in opposition to one, but this gives a broad overview of the breadth of my inquiries and should demonstrate I have been willing to give time to all sides of the debate, Mr President.  I have not been listening to just one side.  I read every e-mail and letter that comes to me - it has been a real challenge this week - and I reply to as many as possible, but that has been impossible this week.  Obviously the last two weeks have allowed very little opportunity to respond to the submissions due to the sheer volume of work we have been doing, the reading we have had to do and the number of e-mails and letters that we have received.  I hope people understand that.

It should also be noted that the opposing voices are not just the radical dark-green groups, as they are often called, who would appear to oppose almost everything.  The opposing voices come from many and diverse backgrounds, including health, legal, environmental, business, a variety of science backgrounds, engineering, a variety of industries, ecological, rural, with highly educated Tasmanians as well as community members without university education who are concerned with both the assessment process of this pulp mill process as well as the social, economic and environmental impacts.  A huge number of people have talked to us or communicated in one way or another.  Whilst you think you cannot possibly hear the same thing again, you do.

Comments have been made by colleagues and a representative of the proponent.  This is a comment that was made some time ago on more than one occasion that just annoyed me somewhat, Mr President.  The comment was that any thinking person could see that this proposal would meet the guidelines and that it should be built.  Mr President, I suggest that any thinking person could see that this proposal does require a thorough and rigorous assessment of a project that may have environmental, social and economic impacts and benefits that all require consideration.  In my mind it is not and has not been a clear-cut decision that any thinking person would support without question.

Mr President, I just want to talk about my overseas pulp mill trip a little bit because I think it is relevant to the debate.

**Mr Aird** - The guided tour?

**Ms FORREST** - We will get to that.  That is interesting coming from you.

**Mr Aird** - I am repeating someone else's words.

**Ms FORREST** - Oh, is that right?  I thought it was your opinion.

**Mr Aird** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - I saw it as an important part of informing myself during the debate.  Part of this was to undertake a pulp mill tour to visit overseas pulp mills and talk with locals who live and work in the areas or in the mills themselves.  Whilst language was a bit of a barrier in some countries we visited, this was overcome and meaningful interaction and consultation did occur.  It made me embarrassed that I only speak one language, quite frankly, and a bit slack.

Initially I stated in this debate that I would not attend an overseas tour as I thought it would not necessarily provide me with any information that could not be obtained through other means, however on further consideration I felt that if I was to stand in this place and confidently state that I had done everything I possibly could to inform myself in this debate and to make this decision, I needed to physically look at and experience a modern pulp mill that as much as possible uses the same modern technology as the proposed mill and that we have the permits here to either accept or reject, so that was my motivation.

This decision was made in the face of some quite public criticism as well as some unfortunate e-mails from people who did not bother to take the time to ask why I had made a decision to attend.  I will read one of many that were received, it was short and to the point, from Mr Bob Bird of Bream Creek who stated - and this is his entire e-mail and it will not take a minute:

'Independent?  Are you really as stupid as you appear?  Do you think the public are too?  Enjoy your junket.'

**Mr Aird** - What was your reply - yes, no, yes, yes, no?

*Members laughing*.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, I am independent; yes, I am as stupid as I appear; no, I do not think the public are; and junket, do you want to join us?  It is no junket.

This highlights the depths some people go to undermine and judge our actions without taking time to discuss the issues or even understand our motivation.  There were many of those but that was just a nice short one I thought highlighted the sort of things that we get.

**Ms Ritchie** - They are hardly glamorous though, are they?

**Ms FORREST** - Junkets?

**Ms Ritchie** - They're not glamorous.

**Ms FORREST** - No, it was a gruelling schedule.

**Ms Ritchie** - They're tough.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes.  I said to everyone who was criticising that they could come with us and carry our bags if they liked as it would save me carrying them.  No-one was keen to take it up.

I acknowledge that this trip did come at a cost to the taxpayer, Mr President, but the decision I have been called on to make is a very big and important decision that can only be made, I believe, by fully informing myself of as many avenues as possible.  Some of the measures I took in addition to the pulp mill trip I have already mentioned, and I can honestly say that my entire trip overseas, including talking to the concerned locals in Chile, certainly did not influence my decision; rather, the entire trip informed my decision.

I was quite disappointed by the attitudes and comments of some of my colleagues who saw fit to attempt to discredit aspects of my discussions with concerned locals and the value and motivation of my inquiries, particularly due to the fact that the trip was organised by an international organisation, the Surfrider Foundation, that I was well aware had a strong environmental arm to their organisation.

I would like to place on record, Mr President, that I requested assistance from more than one source to gain access to locals during my visit which involved the wine-making industry, health, fishing and tourism, these being areas of concern to many Tasmanians in this debate.  It soon became very evident that, with such a short lead time, the amount of time on the ground in that region, language barriers, the isolation of these communities and the lack of access to transport, opportunities were very limited, as indeed I believe the rest of the group also discovered when they made attempts to talk to the locals as well.

I was very grateful and I continue to be very grateful that an international organisation such as Surfrider Foundation had the resources and capacity to arrange a trip at short notice across time zones not only to see people I wished to see but also people they are aware of through their environmental activities they wanted me to talk to.  I think it is only fair and reasonable we listen to both sides of debate in this, Mr President.  I believe this is particularly important in light of the fact that the majority of the rest of the trip was facilitated by the proponent to mills chosen by members of the delegation.  There were the same sort of difficulties we would have encountered in accessing these mills at short notice with a very tight time frame and, I suggest, some gruelling schedule and language difficulties and barriers as well.  They enabled us to have the valuable opportunity of spending the best part of a day in meetings with mill designer, Poyry, and supplier Andritz, and these proved very valuable and informative.  I think if we had not had the support of Gunns in that we probably would not have had all those briefings and opportunities in the time frame that was available to us.

I did have some initial reservations about it but I do not have a problem with how it was organised because it was a very tight schedule and there was hardly a moment to spare.  The only time we sat around waiting was in airports and that is hardly an exciting life, I can tell you, particularly in some of them.

As with any debate, particularly in a debate that has the capacity to cause such divided opinions and concerns, I certainly attempt to and intend to continue to listen to all sides of the story and consider each point of view.  I firmly believe that it is only through this open-minded approach that I find myself in a position to make a fully informed decision in this debate.  People in the media certainly have asked whether my visit to world's best practice pulp mills in South America convinced me to support or not support the proposal before us.  The same people have asked whether my discussions with people in the region surrounding the pulp mills convinced me either way.  The answer to both is no.

The entire overseas trip and all the other work that I have been doing all plays a part in working my way through this task of deciding whether I will support or reject the proposal before us.  The information that I received from the neighbouring villages and communities of the Nueva Aldea mill in Chile did reveal issues that were also identified by others in the group in discussions with locals.  During the commissioning phase in particular odour events were reasonably common and unpleasant at times.  Mill management also stated that odour events had occurred, and certainly more frequently during the commissioning phase.

I was concerned to hear that the neighbouring vineyards had experienced a downturn in drive-by cellar-door sales since the mill had begun operation.  I think anyone would be disappointed to hear that a business had been impacted upon adversely by any development, particularly in view of the fact that these vineyards are located on the main highway between Santiago and Concepción.  In one case an expansion had been planned, but that had been abandoned due to this downturn.  I thought that was an unfortunate set of events that he had experienced.  We were informed by the mill management that they conduct tours for tourists from a lagoon area some 60 to 70 kilometres away and that approximately 20 000 have visited the site on these free tours that are arranged by the mill operators.

The disappointing aspect to this was that as the tour bus left to return visitors to their accommodation 50 to 60 kilometres away, they did not stop and take the busload of tourists anywhere but straight back to their accommodation.  They did not stop at any of the cellar-door vineyards on the way, they did not go into the little local town nearby so they could spend a few tourist dollars there; they just picked them up, took them to the mill and then took them back.  There may be a lesson in that for the proponent here.  If a mill gets up and there are people visiting it would be really important that they encourage the people who are visiting to go and check out the vineyards down the road and other tourism ventures in this area.  It was really sad and it did upset the business operators who have certainly had a downturn in trade since the mill had been located there.  It could have been very different if things had been done a bit differently by the mill.

The overseas trip was very useful in many ways, including seeing at first hand what a modern pulp mill really looks like and how it is operated.  We also learnt about the challenges they had faced, especially during the commissioning phase, and how they were dealt with.  It is difficult in many ways, though, to make direct comparisons to the project before us, as there are significant differences in the areas of location, proximity to resource, socioeconomics of the region, meteorological and geographic differences.  The two most similar mills in terms of technology and processes are both located in South America in quite remote and socially disadvantaged communities.  The Veracel mill in Brazil is in what I would consider an ideal location in the middle of an eucalypt plantation with a crop rotation time of approximately seven years.  These trees grow to 35 metres in this period.  One of our more mathematical members of the team worked out that it was over 1 centimetre a day.  So it would be more exciting to watch the trees grow in Brazil than watching grass grow.

Although these trees are quite slender, the temperature and rainfall allows this growth rate that we do not see in Tasmania.  The location at this mill was very flat, hardly a hill in sight.  The nearest village was 20 to 30 kilometres away.  It was outside the plantation area.  So the mill was sort of in the middle of nowhere, which is pretty ideal, I guess.  The Nueva Aldea mill in Chile was located in the Itata Valley.  This is not a valley to readily compare with the Tamar Valley.  I would not have thought it was in a valley really, but that is what it is called.

But it was also in a much cooler climate.  Brazil is a tropical climate.  That is why they get those growth rates.  The one in Chile was much more like Tasmania, in that it was a cooler climate and it also was close to or on the Itata River.  The Itata River is different to the Tamar River.  It is quite a wide river but very shallow.  It has not the depth that the Tamar has.

The mill was closely surrounded by vineyards and the neighbouring villages were only a few kilometres away, so in that respect it was more like the Tamar Valley.  The tourism industry was not focused close to this mill, however.  The tourism industry was focused about 50 to 60 kilometres away toward the coast, whereas this was inland.  There was no fishing industry in the river, but I was informed a quite important and lucrative fishing industry was in the ocean off the coast where the tourism activities occurred.  Because of these similarities, as well as the acknowledged differences, I organised my trip at this location in particular to talk to as many locals as I could in the time available and I did prepare a written report on what I was told by the people I met.  I did talk to a lot of people in various areas.

I do not make any assumptions about these comments, including whether the occurrence of gastrointestinal upsets and headaches that occur predominantly in children were directly related to the odour events experienced at the time.  The health professionals who I spoke to in that town did not either.  They merely stated that these events had occurred.  As a health professional I know how hard it is to establish causal links in such events and certainly would not attempt to do so with such limited information.  It may have been a coincidence, though the number of times it happened would make it unlikely, but I am not going to suggest that that was the reason because I do not know enough about it.

My discussions with the neighbouring vineyards revealed odour events had occurred quite frequently during the commissioning phase and less frequently during operation.  However they stated that when the wind was blowing in the direction of their vineyard odour events were quite frequent even during the operation phase.  I was informed that drive-by cellar door sales had dropped since the mill was built, especially when the steam was blown across the highway in the direction of the vineyard.  Even though it is only steam, people do not know what it is and they just see it.  This is the major highway between Santiago and Concepción.

There was a comment by one vineyard owner that a vineyard 20 kilometres from the mill had had an 80 000 order of bottled wine rejected, as the mill management had not issued a certificate to state that the mill's operation would not impact on this product that was sold as an organic wine.  The member for Windermere contacted the mill manager and sought confirmation regarding that and he stated that no request had been made.  On follow-up investigation of that, I did not speak to the owner of the vineyard directly, because he speaks Spanish and over the phone that would not have worked, but I have a media release here from a Chilean site, and I want to read briefly from that as it explains maybe that was not the case and it was not a document that was required.  This is Santiago, Chile, 31 May 2006:

'An important deal consisting of 80 thousand bottles of organic wine between Itata Wines and Sweden was rejected a few days ago, due to damage done to the Itata region's international image after the instalation of the CELCO Pulp Mill.  This is how the information was released by the representative of Itata Wines, Heinrich Männle.  He is the owner of Männle wines, situated 20 kilometres from Chillán in the small valley of El Naranjal in the Octavia region.'

Just where this mill is.  Further on it says:

'The vineyard manager specified that he had 80 thousand units of high quality organic wine ready for shipment to the European nation.  However, upon hearing that this wine was to be sourced from the Itata river basin where Celco was to commence their operations and pump effluent directly in to the river as well as emit air contaminants, the buyers took a step back.'

Again it is a media release that I cannot hang my hat on, but it seems that the location of the mill may have impacted on this particular wine order.

It is important to note, though, that when we talk about these odour events occurring, the odour abatement measures at the Nueva Aldea mill are certainly not as comprehensive as those proposed by the Gunns pulp mill.  They have the recovery boiler and a flare.  As other members have mentioned, the Gunns proposal has a recovery boiler and two incinerators which operate at a much higher temperature than a flare does.  One would hope that that would make a significant difference, and that is the reason direct comparison is inappropriate.

The economic benefits to the neighbouring villages was also an issue that was discussed with locals.  The general comments suggest that during construction there were benefits to local villages and a number of locals were employed.  However, during the commissioning and operating phase very few locals were employed even in the forestry operations as contractors were generally used.  The contractors used workers who were sourced from other areas, primarily the bigger towns and cities.  These contract workers generally came to the area en masse, stayed in on-site vans and similar accommodation and then moved on.  The only real benefit to these small local villages - and you must remember we are in a very poor part of Chile - was in providing food to some of these workers and occasional accommodation.

We cannot really compare that with what would be the case in Tasmania but these were the observations that were made.  People in the region felt this was often due to the fact that the mill required skilled workers and that in this particular area there were poorer education standards and fewer opportunities in the small villages for people to be upskilled and to meet those requirements.  As I said, this is not an aspect that can be compared with Tasmania as I think we generally have quite good education standards, but there is always room for improvement.  We also have the potential to increase training opportunities in Tasmania - that has been identified through this debate.  Our biggest challenge will be getting enough skilled workers even with the educational facilities we have to meet the needs.

I also had discussions with tourism operators, concerned residents and a mayor of a coastal village Cobquecura.  That is a growing tourism destination with significant building in the tourism industry going on in this area when I visited.  This is an area that has a great surf beach.  The surf was not so good the day I was there but I am not a surfer, and there were still people out there.  The major reason for their concern in this particular little town which is approximately 50 kilometres from the mill was that the mill is currently constructing a pipeline to pump the waste-water effluent out to sea.  You might remember I said it was being pumped into the river currently.  This pipeline will be some little distance away from the actual Cobquecura township but the currents in this area flow from south to north and their village is north of the river mouth.

There was concern amongst the tourism operators and the fishermen who have a well-established industry in this area that this effluent could flow to their region on the currents that take anything that way.  This pipeline is being constructed along the Itata River, under the mouth of the river and then out to sea.  I saw the construction of this as it was going on.  We drove along the edge of the river and out to the river mouth.  This is in an area that has a high risk of earthquake and last year there were torrential rains that washed away the river mouth.  The locals are concerned that in such conditions there is a high risk of the high density polyethylene pipe being damaged or rupturing in the circumstances of earthquake or a similar event or with tsunamis they have had in the region as well.  I can understand their concern.  It is not unrealistic to be a bit anxious about that.

The information I gained during my investigations included advice from all I spoke to that if any mill goes ahead - this is not only in Chile but in other parts when we talked to people - very tight regulation is needed and a regulator that is completely independent of government and the proponent is vital.  There were also numerous suggestions that significant sanctions for breaches of conditions and emission limits were essential.  The comment was made that in some of these countries where breaches occurred the sanctions were minimal and so there was no financial disincentive for a proponent to not breach certain guidelines.  When we talked to the mill management - in each of the mills we visited we had extensive briefings from the mill management - discussions and briefings at the on-site inspection of the pulp mill were very open and comprehensive.  At the Veracel mill in Brazil we were in attendance at a time when the mill was experiencing an interruption to normal production and parts of the mill were undergoing a partial shutdown and start-ups during this time.  From our investigations we know now that this is a time that can potentially result in odour events.  Any odour I detected at the time of our visit was minor and not for any lengthy duration.

I suggest the fact that our delegation was given access to the mill at this time to observe the correction of this problem showed that the mill management was very open and up-front about their mill operations.  They did not seem to be at all concerned that we were hanging around watching everything going on and the workers getting the things back on track.  The other thing, Mr President, is that they were also flying the Australian flag at the gate of the mill, as they all did.  Even our accommodation place had the Australian flag flying, which I thought was very nice; it recognised that we were there.

These visits and briefings were very informative and certainly highlighted differences between old mills of the past and what a new mill is all about.  The control room in these modern mills would put our IT in this place, and possibly others, to shame.  It was staggering the amount of IT that goes on.  That is what we would be looking at in a mill such as this - highly technical.

Mr President, I want to look at the issue of amending the permit which seems to have raised a concern in the community, that we do not have the capacity to amend the permit.  The honourable member for Huon mentioned that in his contribution.  I do not see that as a problem, personally, because I am of the firm opinion that if this mill is to be built and our regulator is going to regulate, they need to get it right the first time.  We do not want to be having to fix it up.  I do not have the skills or the capacity to do it myself so I am relying on the people who are going to be regulating it to do it.  If it is not right then it is fairly simple; you do not support it.

As these permits and conditions have been prepared by the regulatory bodies, the regulatory bodies responsible for ensuring the permits and guidelines are met, I need to be satisfied this permit will be able to achieve this and meet all the requirements that I and others believe must be met.  I also need to be pretty convinced that the regulatory bodies have the power, teeth and capacity to monitor and oversee this development and to impose significant sanctions in a timely manner should a breach occur.  That has been discussed by other members in some detail.

When we are looking at best available technology, this is against what these permits were established or prepared.  I was interested in a comment from Stefan Antell who is one of the chief executives of the mill designers, Poyry.  He stated in a briefing yesterday that to build the best pulp mill in the world is easy to say but not as easy to do.  I do believe that he fully believes that Poyry are well up to the task, so I thought that was an interesting comment.

Much has been said about what best available technology is and this term has been used a lot in this debate.  Because the integrated pollution prevention and control - IPPC - guidelines are referred to in the permits themselves I thought I would read the definition of what best available technology is.  In leading up to what it is, it says:

'the definition of the term "best available techniques" ' -

actually, they do not say 'technology', they say 'techniques' -

'are described in this preface.  This description is inevitably incomplete and is given for information only.'

So it is just to guide us, I guess.  But the term 'best available techniques' is defined in Article 2.11 of the directive as -

'the most effective and advanced stage in the development of activities and their methods of operation which indicate the practical suitability of particular techniques for providing in principle the basis for emission limit values designed to prevent and, where that is not practicable, generally to reduce emissions and the impact on the environment as a whole.'

Article 2.11 goes on to further clarify this definition as follows:

' "techniques" includes both the technology used and the way in which the installation is designed, built, maintained, operated and decommissioned;

"available" techniques are those developed on a scale which allows implementation in the relevant industrial sector, under economically and technically viable conditions, taking into consideration the costs and advantages, whether or not the techniques are used or produced inside the Member State in question, as long as they are reasonably accessible to the operator;

"best" means most effective in achieving a high general level of protection of the environment as a whole.'

[12.00 p.m.]

It does go on further and describes it in a little bit more detail which I will not go into, Mr President.  I wanted to read that out because when we look at this permit  I will ask the question:  are this permit and project really considering a mill that employs the best available techniques as defined, or the best available techniques at the price the proponent can afford?  I think it is an important point because effectively you probably could build a mill with many other techniques that may clean up or reduce the effluent in the water, and we did hear in a briefing that you could put in a special filter that would remove almost all, if not all, the suspended solids in the effluent, but that comes at a price of about $54 million.

So is this mill employing best available techniques, or best available techniques at the price the proponents can afford?  I think it is a relevant question.  I believe this is the case because of a number of representations I have received from very experienced and qualified people and my own research confirmed that there are a number of techniques, including the filter I was just mentioning, that could reduce water emissions to lower levels.  However, they do not come cheap and the benefit may be quite small in comparison to the costs incurred.  The definition talks about cost-effectiveness.  We accept this as best available techniques, but it is at a cost that is deemed acceptable.  That is in financial terms.  It does go on to the environment as well.

I suggest that many modern mills around the world do not use these techniques because of the high costs.  They would not be economically viable if they did.  So what we are seeing around many parts of the world - and I saw this personally on my own overseas investigation of modern pulp mills - is that these pulp mills use accepted modern technology or the perhaps misguided term 'world's best available techniques' at a price they can afford to remain profitable.  That is an important point, because there are potentially things out there that could improve the performance of a mill but it does not come cheap.

Whether this is a reasonable approach and whether we should accept this in Tasmania is open to debate. The proponent has already stated publicly that these conditions and permits are so strict and tough that they may not be able to meet them.

To expect the proponent to spend an extra $100 million or more on other techniques to achieve emission standards that many other modern mills around the world currently do not have would potentially make this project unviable.  I do have some concerns with comments made by Mr Gay of Gunns that some of the conditions are so strict that they may be unable to meet them, but I hope that he would be very up-front about this and clearly identify which conditions are posing these challenges.

I believe that if any of these conditions cannot or may not be able to be met, particularly the environmental conditions, then this project should not proceed.  Why take the risk of building a mill that at the end of the day may not be able to operate within the permits and conditions?  But I am sure that the Gunns board will be giving this issue some very close scrutiny.  The last thing that any of us would like to see is this mill going ahead or at least getting substantially under way - there is that word 'substantially under way' - only to find that to meet these permit conditions as they are set will require significant further capital expenditure and that without government financial support this project could fail.  So the homework really needs to be done beforehand.

Many of us would also be aware that the World Bank released draft environmental health and safety guidelines for pulp and paper mills on 15 June this year.  The honourable member for Huon alluded to this in his contribution.  This document is quite broad-brush in its approach.  It is more about identifying what sources of the environmental health and safety adverse impacts may be and considering what best available techniques may be.

These draft guidelines do make limited comment and suggestion as to the level of emissions.  It states in the report that chlorinated dioxins and furans are produced in the process and makes the following comment, and I quote from the draft report:

'These are an important issue when elemental chlorine is used for bleaching although the levels of dioxins discharged are below the level of scientific significance when EFC or TCF bleaching technologies are used.'

It will be interesting to see what comments are made by international bodies and experts currently attempting to identify what is a safe level, if there is indeed a safe level of chlorinated dioxins and furans in our environment, and what advice will be provided to the World Bank in commenting on this draft document.

It is a draft document, and still open to public comment.  It should also be noted that emerging technology was to be considered under the emission guidelines when determining what was accepted modern technology, as part of the terms that were used to engage the consultant SWECO PIC, and this was particularly related to the process of pine or softwood.  Has this been done in this process?  I saw little evidence of consideration given to accepted modern techniques in the pine processing side of it.  Remember that the final scope guidelines brought the pine or softwood into it, not the emission guidelines.  From my five days of looking at the permits and conditions, I cannot see that has been clearly spelt out.

Baseline monitoring is one of the very important tasks that needs to be undertaken if this pulp mill is to go ahead.  Hydrodynamic modelling has been identified as inadequate by almost every qualified commentator in this debate.  It has been identified in many submissions to the RPDC assessment, in a SWECO PIC report, and by many experts in the field, even though some of their views are contradictory - the nature of scientific review, it would appear.  The Federal Environment minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has also made this observation.

The permits before us also include a condition that further hydrodynamic modelling is to be conducted prior to the commissioning of the mill.  Whilst we are informed by the Director of Environmental Management that what is needed to meet the hydrodynamic modelling is more finetuning than a major redoing of the modelling, I would suggest that this one issue alone has caused significant concern to the community at large.  The Federal Environment minister's draft conditions, No. 19 and 20, resulting from the assessment under the EPBC act, also requires more hydrodynamic modelling and again that is only a draft document and it is subject to change.

Mr President, why are we not demanding that this research - which I believe is quite important, and which has been identified by almost every scientific opinion as necessary prior to proceeding - is conducted prior to the approval of any commencement?  It is only required prior to commissioning.  The commissioning does not happen until the mill is completely built.  So effectively you could have a mill completely built before you get the results in from the hydrodynamic modelling and find we have a problem here and are going to have to put in that filter, an extra $54 million, or need to extend the pipe or relocate the pipe or something, all of which would incur significant cost.  Surely it would be better to have this hydrodynamic modelling done to a standard that will give you all the answers, give comfort to everyone concerned, particularly the fishermen and the people who are concerned about any effluent flowing in to the coast.  It would give them some comfort if it had been ticked off, but it is not ticked off.  I know the permits and conditions require it before commissioning, but not before commencement or construction.

The necessity of baseline monitoring in areas of health, air quality and water in Bass Strait and the seabed sediment and sentient sea life has already been conducted to some degree.  After a briefing with Dr Roscoe Taylor, our Director of Public Health, I would suggest the baseline monitoring in the area of health needs to be more comprehensively conducted prior to the commissioning of a pulp mill, should it proceed, to fully assess the current health status of the Tamar Valley residents.  It would appear that current monitoring does not consider some confounders, such as smoking in particular.  I believe it is vitally important to avoid criticism later on, if any adverse impacts are to be rightly or wrongly attributed to the mill.  This will only be achieved in the presence of vigorous baseline health data and that could reasonably be collected over the two years that it will take to build it before it is commissioned.

I hope the Leader might give me some commitment to that in his reply.  It is very important that, if we are going to be linking adverse health impacts to a particular development, you at least have very good baseline data.  We could end up in a situation where people genuinely feel they had some adverse impact because of the mill, but because the baseline data has not been comprehensively done you cannot say yes or no.  What happens to that person?  I just hope the Leader will give me some assurance about that.

The issue of air emissions is a very important one, especially with the proposed siting of the pulp mill in the Tamar Valley, an area that has a well-understood and acknowledged air quality issue, especially in the winter months.  Air quality monitoring in this area, including Launceston, has shown a continual improvement, resulting primarily from the work of local government in the area acting to reduce wood heater and outdoor incinerator use and thus emissions over recent years.  The honourable member for Windermere mentioned they have a requirement to be wood‑heater-free by the year 20 something?

**Mr Dean** - Year 2012; a report is being made.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, so they are on the job, I would say, in that regard, which is good.  But obviously ongoing work needs to be done in that area.  One of the major concerns for health professionals and residents of this region is the ultra-fine particulate matter, or PM2.5s as they are known.  These are the particularly fine particulates that invade the human body through the delicate tissues of the lungs, much more so than the larger and potentially less harmful PM10s.  When you look at PM10 measurements they are actually including the PM2.5s in that measurement.  On the overseas trip I undertook, I asked at each mill about the levels of PM2.5 that they release -

**Mr Parkinson** - Study tour.

**Ms FORREST** - Study tour, okay; fact-finding mission.  I asked about their release of PM2.5 and what techniques they use to measure and capture these ultra-fine particles.  At each of the mills I was informed that they do not measure PM2.5 because it is not a problem with pulp mills; only in industry where heavy metals are burnt or smelted.  I found this somewhat unusual, as other discussions I had had with other experts in the field, and continue to have since my return, advise me that PM2.5 is released from pulp mills, albeit not in high quantities.  PM2.5s and 2.10s produced in pulp mills are also removed through the use of electrostatic precipitators, but electrostatic precipitators remove about 99 per  cent of PM10s which is almost all of them, you must admit, but they are not as efficient at removing PM2.5.

**Mr Parkinson** - Every diesel vehicle on the road does the same thing.

**Ms FORREST** - I am getting to that.  The actual amount of 2.5s that is removed by the electrostatic precipitators is very hard to ascertain.  I had someone very involved in the industry try to get some figures for me and his comment to me was that the designers of these bits of equipment keep their figures very close to their chest.  I am not sure why that is, Mr President, but he did not have any success and he is in the industry.  I thought I would give up at that point, but clearly I will go on.  They are part of the pulp mill.

It has proved somewhat difficult to find extensive research on this issue in the short time available, however a well referenced article entitled *Air Pollutants, their Sources and Effects* printed this year on the web site of the Government of New Brunswick in Canada does state the PM2.5 is released from pulp mills.  I will just read the comments in relation to PM2.5:

'These particles are thought to be of special significance in terms of health impacts, as they have a higher chance of entering and remaining in the lungs if inhaled, compared to PM 10 or larger particles.  They are sometimes referred to as "respirable particles".

Particulate matter in the PM 2.5 size range is emitted from industrial and domestic combustion sources including slash burning, industrial processes (e.g. power plants, pulp mills, mining, smelting, and refining), open fires, woodstoves, forest fires and internal combustion engines of all kinds.  PM 2.5 also forms when other air pollutants react together in the air.'

It goes on to further say that - this is what the honourable Leader was alluding to

'Transportation, industrial and other fuel combustion account for about 25% of the PM 2.5 emitted to the air.  The rest comes from so-called "open" sources, which include open burning, forest fires, road dust and construction.  The estimated emissions from road dust and forest fires are very large, and dominate the inventory.  Emissions from some source sectors are of greater concern than others in terms of health and other environmental effects.  Recent studies indicate that particulate from combustion sources is more "biologically active" than road or other dust from terrestrial sources.  Diesel exhaust is of special concern as it is thought to contribute significantly to the risk of lung cancer.

Numerous studies worldwide continue to find a significant association between PM 2.5 concentrations and a wide range of health effects, including premature mortality, many cardio-pulmonary symptoms, reduced activity, increased physician visits and other forms of disability'.

So I think it is fairly clear that they are a part of it, but only a small part of the PM2.5 emissions - that is, pulp mills - and that you can say that the pulp mills are not a major contributor of PM2.5 to the atmosphere and that the diesel fumes are much worse.  When you consider the number of extra trucks that could be on the road that are diesel fuelled - this is not just the log trucks, there are other trucks during the construction phase - we do need to take it seriously and the monitoring could show a spike in 2.5 because of the trucks more than the pulp mill.  However, pulp mills are only a small source.

The British Columbia Provincial Health Office's annual report of 2003 entitled 'Every Breath You Take' comments on sources of PM2.5 air pollutants and shows the pulp and paper industry accounted for 9 per cent of PM2.5 air emissions.  In their report there are a couple of graphs that shows that the pulp and paper industry account for 9 per cent; residential wood consumption, 10 per cent; forest fires, 16 per cent.  The wood industry - I am not sure how that differs from some of the others - is 16 per cent also.  Prescribed burning, 26 per cent and 'other' is 23 per cent.  In the big scheme of things it is not a huge contribution but there is some emission from pulp mills.

I would suggest from this information that PM2.5s should be closely monitored in both baseline studies in the Tamar Valley and Launceston areas and continuous monitoring during commissioning and operation is maintained.  It must be noted at this time that there are only advisory levels for emission limits in this area.  It is only recently becoming evident that this particulate matter has a high propensity for harm to human health.

It was much easier to search for English-speaking countries when trying to find this information.  I did get a Swedish paper the other day and had to get some assistance with a bit of translation but the Canadian ones you can usually get in English and that was handy.  A Canadian paper titled 'Towards More Innovative Air Quality Management.  Proposal for a Pulp and Paper Air Quality Forum.  Smart Regulations Report from the Forest Products Association of Canada and Environment Canada' September 2004 - I want to quote from that paper in a moment.  It should be noted this report is a joint venture between the Forest Products Association of Canada and Environment Canada, which I thought was great.  We have the environment people and the forestry people working together so hopefully we have some overarching consensus in this.  The purpose of this joint initiative I thought I would read.  It is quite good really.

'The Forest Practices Association of Canada and Environment Canada, with critical advice from a group of environmental experts drawn from provincial industry associations, provinces, Aboriginal peoples and the environmental community, have developed the concept of a Pulp and Paper Air Quality Forum'.

This is in their recommendation:

'The pulp and paper industry, through FPAC, will lead this forum' -

so the forestry industry are leading the forum -

'with a strong commitment from Environment Canada to support the forum and to work with all parties to make it a success.'

The paper goes on to discuss the industry in Canada.

When relating this to the pulp mill proposal and permit before us, I wish to quote the article under 'Protecting Human Health and Air Quality' as this is an issue that has been raised as a matter of concern not only from residents of the Tamar Valley but other health professionals in the area and the Australian Medical Association.  This is under the section 'Protecting Human Health and Air Quality' -

'The dominant health risk associated with smog is respiratory illness, ranging in severity from impaired breathing to mortality.  There is considerable scientific evidence of the health risks associated with fine particulate matter (PM2.5).  In addition to respiratory illness, PM2.5 has been linked to cardiovascular anomalies and changes in immune system responses.  There is no lower PM2.5 threshold for these health effects.  Studies of the direct effects of SO2 and NO2 - both PM2.5 precursors - indicate lung function problems and respiratory symptoms, similar to those related to PM2.5'.

Mr President, while we have looked at PM2.5, we need to remember that the sulphur dioxide, SO2, and nitrous oxide, NO2, are precursors to particulate matter or PM2.5, so we need to look at the whole picture, not just one measure within it.  It further goes on to say:

'Nationally the pulp and paper industry ranks in the top five industrial sectors for emissions of criteria air contaminants including PM, SOx, NOx, VOC and CO.  The contribution of mill emissions to air quality varies from region to region.

In addition to health concerns related to these common air contaminants, a number of other air pollutants emitted by pulp and paper mills raise health concerns.  According to the National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) the pulp and paper sector contributes significantly to total emissions to air of' -

**Mr Parkinson** - What are you reading from?

**Ms FORREST** - This is from a forum held between the Forest Products Association of Canada and Environment Canada.

' - acetaldehyde, chlorine dioxide (ClO2) and hydrogen sulphide (H2S).  Based on a federal risk assessment done under CEPA 1999, acetaldehyde was determined to be toxic due to its characterization as a carcinogen and as a respiratory irritant.  Scientific literature on other pollutants such as ClO2 [chlorine dioxide] and H2S [hydrogen sulphide] indicates health effects, and these are being or will be taken into account in current and future risk assessments for these substances.'

**Mr Parkinson** - This is some sort of sector-wide comment, is it?

**Ms FORREST** - If you listened to what I have read out, the purpose of the forum, this group has been established - and I will go back -

**Mr Parkinson** - Were they talking about the whole sector, though, the whole pulpwood forestry sector?  I didn't get the impression that you were referring to -

**Ms FORREST** - The Forest Products Association of Canada and Environment Canada with critical advice from a group of environmental experts drawn from provincial industry associations -

**Mr Parkinson** - I don't get the impression that you are talking about an assessment of modern-day pulp mill technology.

**Ms FORREST** - It was done in 2004 in relation to pulp mills and they would be looking at modern technology if it was in 2004.

**Mr Parkinson** - So they are looking at the sector?

**Ms FORREST** - They are looking at the way forward.  That is what the forum was for, to look at the way forward.

**Mr Parkinson** - It just sounds like very generalised comments to me and not the reference to the best pulp mills in the world.

**Ms FORREST** - You might like to have a look at this article later.  It is establishing a forum to look forward.

**Mr Parkinson** - I'm more interested in what your impression of the article was.

**Ms FORREST** - I could read you more of the executive summary but it is the forest industry and the environment working together to try to look at how they can best work together to improve environmental outcomes in the pulp and paper industry as a whole and that, to me, is looking forward rather than looking back.

Dr Roger Drew of Toxicos, the Gunns expert in this area, also discusses the issue of PM2.5s in his expert witness statement prepared for Gunns Limited.  I think you would have to agree that ultra-fine particles or PM2.5 is an issue that must be and is considered in this permit.

I do have some concerns that in the permit emission guidelines for particulate matter PM2.5 and PM10s, monitoring the very stations other than the Rowella station that utilised a tapering element oscillating microbalance technique, sampling techniques, frequency of sampling, averaging time, analysis technique and reference method are all yet to be determined and will be as approved by the director.  Whilst I accept the director will make a reasoned and informed decision regarding these requirements, I would suggest that these are important onground measures.  These measures demonstrate what is happening on the ground where these people live and work as opposed to the other measures, which are important certainly, but these are measures looking at what is happening on the ground.  I think these should be monitored regularly and frequently, especially over winter.  They may well be, but in the permits as they stand I cannot be sure of that.

**Mr Parkinson** - Why didn't you ask the question in a briefing if you weren't sure?

**Ms FORREST** - I did, and it is still to be determined.

Whilst in reality this may well be the case that there will be frequent monitoring, I ask why such an important measure has not already been established in the monitoring program that is clearly defined within the permit before us and I did not really get a clear answer to that.

There was also a concern in my mind - and I did raise this in briefings as well - that chlorate and chlorine dioxide levels released from the chlorite plant vent scrubber, the chlorine dioxide plant vent gas scrubber and the bleach plant vent are to be determined also.  I would have thought that with potentially dangerous chemicals such as these, emission limits would have already been established.  This may well have resulted due to the fact that Gunns did provide two options for their chemical plant.  Option one was deemed non-compliant by SWECO PIC and option two represented accepted modern technology and was deemed compliant.

We have been informed that Gunns intend to proceed with option two, a decision, I believe, that was made very soon after the release of the SWECO PIC report, however I would have expected that as this is accepted modern technology, the information needed by the Department of Environmental Management would have been available and therefore emission limits would have been set.  When looking at water emissions, I am sure that almost everyone is aware of the highly toxic pollutants that were pumped into our seas and inland waterways in years gone by, and hence a lot of the fear that is coming about in this debate.  It was very bad.

This was also the case with air emissions.  Tonnes of harmful and toxic chemicals were released into these waters.  I believe that this happened at a time when generally we were much less aware and did not have anywhere near the knowledge we do now regarding these toxic substances.  However, the end result was that many of these waters around the world were heavily polluted as a result and they remain heavily polluted in the sediments of the ocean, lake or river bottom.

Sydney Harbour is one such example.  However, this heavy pollution did not occur as a result of a pulp mill discharging any effluent into that area.  The Baltic Sea has been affected by pulp mills of the past as well as a number of other heavy industries in Finland and Sweden and some of the other Scandinavian countries.  This resulted in significant contamination to the point that the water and anything that survived living in the water was not fit for human consumption.

It must be remembered that pulp mills are not the only source of dioxins and furans that are released into environment also.  As stated in a paper by William Murray of the Science and Technology Division of the Government of Canada entitled, 'Pulp and Paper:  the Reduction of Toxic Effluents' in 1992:

'PCDDs and PCDFs also are produced during pulp bleaching, where they are formed from chlorinated phenols, and particularly from chlorinated 2‑phenoxyphenols.  Bleachery effluents account for the release of 5-15 grams total PCDD and PCDF (congeners) per year in Sweden.  Accordingly, the Swedish pulp industry is responsible for only a very small amount (1.7%) of the approximately 1 kg of PCDDs and PCDFs released from all sources in that country.'

It goes on to further say:

'Similarly, in the United States, it was estimated that in 1990 the pulp and paper industry would be contributing only 1.5% of the approximately 40 kg of total PCDDs and PCDFs released to the environment annually.'

So they are not the main culprit here necessarily, that is the point.  A paper written by Brent Herbert-Copley entitled, 'To the Limits ... and Beyond?  Firm-level Responses to Regulation in the Canadian Pulp and Paper Industry', clearly shows enormous improvements in the effluent discharge and pollutants within this effluent over the last two decades.  In his report it shows that since 1998 in Canadian pulp and paper mills the levels of dioxins and furans in grams per year has gone from 360 grams per year in 1988 to 2 grams in 1994.  Then in 1995 and 1996 they were not measured.  As they said, when they get to such low levels they are very difficult to measure unless you have highly specialised equipment.  So there has been a huge improvement over the years in the technologies that are used.

There are many papers that have been written that highlight the enormous improvements over the years besides these ones.  A quick look at the Alliance for Environmental Technology web site provides a number of references to improvements made and the ECF process has resulted in reductions in the production of dioxins and furans to very low levels.

My own research and discussion with experts in the paper and pulp industry also confirm this view.  Progress will continually improve technology and techniques available to and used in pulp and papermaking.  However, as I stated previously, this does come at a financial cost.  We hear comments from areas such as these that yes, there was a problem and now it is much better.  We heard in one briefing from a delegation that went to Finland looking at pulp mills that a lady interviewed said, 'You can even swim in the water and eat the fish caught in it now'.

When you hear those sorts of comments you must consider that they are being made from a very different starting point from ours in Tasmania.  They are going from a really bad picture where you could not swim in the water and you could not eat the fish to one where they can, which is great, but we are starting from a different starting point.  The comparison between these two situations is not appropriate and we see it being made quite often.

I believe this is one of the main reasons there has been great concern from our fishermen and those who use our northern beaches for recreational activities and appreciate this part of Bass Strait.  While it does have a background level of dioxins and other pollutants as all other areas do due to human activities in the area and by-products of nature itself, one in particular being bushfires, this is essentially a pristine environment and if we add any pollution to this area it is a potentially backward step.  I am not saying there are no pollutants in the area, there always will be because by the very nature of nature that happens, but we have to consider whether we are taking a backward step or not.

[12.30 p.m.]

We are informed that in an area in South America where raw sewage is pumped into a river and there is a pulp mill that uses older technology upstream, a new mill is being built in this river that will assist in cleaning up the river, as this mill will take the sewage from that town and put it through their water treatment plant.  So that mill will certainly have a net benefit and will have a very positive impact on the water quality in that river.  But we are not looking at the same situation here.

That mill is on the border between Uruguay and Argentina.  In cases such as that, no-one would argue that the mill in that area is positive in that regard anyway, but it is interesting that that mill has had significant opposition and protest.  There is a bridge over the river which was cut off by protesters for some time.  Even when you can see this mill will bring a significant benefit to that area we still see opposition, so it makes it so hard to know what is best.

It would also seem from the information of the European Commission Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Reference Document on Best Available Techniques in the Pulp and Paper Industry December 2001, the documents that these permits and conditions are actually based on, and other research that I have conducted, including a Finnish environment report of 2007 titled *Continuum - Rethinking BAT Emissions of the Pulp and Paper Industry in the European Union* that all are showing levels lower than permit conditions at times being achieved in other mills in Scandinavia and Canada, but again it is difficult to compare if you do not know the exact process of the mills being assessed and whether it is an overall picture and whether it is continuous.  My research has shown that there are mills overseas with lower levels of emissions than some of the ones that we are looking at, but overall we are pretty much in the middle.

We had a report on our seats yesterday that I have not really had a chance to look at, but it looks at where the proposal fits in, the benchmarking of the environmental performance of the Gunns Limited mill in northern Tasmania.  It was only done by EKONO on 24 August 2007 and that is probably why I have only just got it, but it does show where the Gunns pulp mill fits in in the big scheme of things.  It is certainly low down on the left-hand side of the scale which means that it has probably performed better than most mills in the majority of areas, but midway in some.  Overall this is the mill that would meet the needs of the future.

The Finnish Environment Report also contained information that levels of AOX, for example, from Finnish mills were yearly averages of 0.4 and 0.16 kilograms per air-dried tonne in 2001 and 2004 respectively, which is only a small difference from the permit levels of 0.2 kilograms per air-dried tonne.   But as this is where the dioxins and furans are recorded in their overall recording, a small difference can potentially have a significant impact, due to their toxicity.  The risk might be low, but the impact could be big.  We hear people saying it is only going to be the same size as a grain of salt in so many hundred swimming pools.  That is okay, but it is the cumulative effect of those over time.  Remember that this is a very toxic substance, so small amounts go a long way.  We need to be mindful of that.  It is okay to say it is only this big, but only this big can be potentially harmful.  It should be discounted and swept aside.

Other differences in these reports can also be noted, but I did look more closely at AOX for the reason that with highly toxic substances even small differences have the potential to result in significant and harmful impacts.   There continues to be international debate and investigation as to what, if any, level of some of these pollutants is safe.

I would like to consider some of the presentations that we had from Professor Andrew Wadsley.  I appreciate that some of his figures and recommendations have been challenged, but he did make a comment in a briefing last week that dioxins from pulp mills are not a problem as long as you establish and adhere to the correct emission limits.  His view of what those limits should be has been disputed by other commentators.  As I said, due to the highly toxic nature we need to be pretty careful to ensure that if this pulp mill proceeds it does so with rigorous emission limits.

The permit before us clearly states a high level of allowable emissions of this substance that Professor Wadsley is suggesting, as is the Federal Environment minister, Malcolm Turnbull.  As a signatory to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants we do have an international obligation to consider what sources of POPs, as they are called, Australia may contribute to the environment, to land, air or water.  It is very important that we take this obligation seriously and do what we can to reduce, and where possible eliminate, the production and environment releases of the 12 POPs set out in the convention Australia became a party to in August 2004.

Obviously this should not just include careful scrutiny of a pulp mill proposal.  As we know, this will produce dioxins and furans at very small amounts with current technology.  We need to be looking at other activities that may result in production of these persistent organic pollutants as well.

There have been a number of commentators who have had a variety of comments and predictions regarding the safe levels of these substances.  The Federal Government has also suggested that the limit in these permits is too high at 13 picagrams total equivalent per litre and 3.4 picagrams total equivalent per litre should be the limit.  Incidentally, this is a limit that the proponents apparently informed the public can be achieved.  However, we do hear that significantly lower levels, as low as 1 or even 0.55 picagram per total equivalent per litre, are being achieved in Swedish and Canadian mills.

This has been very difficult to confirm, especially when dioxins are not monitored in Scandinavia as it is not seen as an issue.  It is also difficult to compare numbers and values when the tonnage of pulp production and the type of timber used may give different results.  We did hear, Mr President, that pine processing tends to result in higher production of dioxins and furans.  That is one of the reasons I was asking whether the accepted modern technology and new emerging technologies were being considered in the pulping of pine process as required under the assessment process.  I could not find it.

However, the argument has been put that if we are constantly reminded by the proponent and the Government that this will be a world-class mill, operating world's best standards, then one could expect this mill would meet the lowest limit conditions that are met in similar mills, especially as internationally consideration as to what a safe level actually is, is still under debate.  Some would say there is no safe level; others disagree.  So whilst there may be the capacity to reduce limits downwards in the future, it is something that needs to be seriously looked at and considered over time as well.  Often it is only after much research and the passage of time that we can get a definitive answer to some of this, especially in cases where adverse impacts may take many years to manifest and may impact more significantly on future generations.

I remember in the not-too-distant past, Mr President, that I and others in the medical profession informed pregnant women that there appeared to be a safe level of alcohol intake during pregnancy and, whilst we always encouraged women to err on the side of caution and avoid alcohol during pregnancy, it was believed that the occasional drink was okay.  Now current research is showing that perhaps this has been wrong advice and that adverse impacts on the foetus may occur even with very low levels of alcohol intake.  So we need to be constantly alert and moving with current research, and conducting and being a part of research in these important areas.

**Mr Harriss** - That is the case, though, with emerging pulp technology, is it not?

**Ms FORREST** - But I asked the question:  has it been considered?  I cannot find it, I cannot see it, particularly in relation to pine pulping.  Under the terms of engagement that was specifically listed.  But the Leader might have more advice for me on that.  I am sure he will.

**Mr Parkinson** - On advice you seek from me, if I need to convince you of anything, then I will need the detail at this stage.  We do not have a lot of time left.  There will be speakers and there will be summing up and the vote will be taken, so if you need convincing in any way from me I will need detail from you.  I prefer it in writing so that I can get advice and then I will come back to you with whatever advice you need.  It surprises me that you need any after this length of time.  However, we will do what we can to assist.

**Ms FORREST** - I thought I had made a few points clear.

**Mr Parkinson** - I hope I have made my point clear.  I need detail from you if you want advice.

**Ms FORREST** - It is not only advice, there needs to be a commitment to the health baseline monitoring for example, those sorts of things.

**Mr Parkinson** - I need the detail.

**Ms FORREST** - It is therefore very important to do all we can to minimise potential harm, especially when we know for a fact that dioxins and furans are extremely toxic in small amounts, especially for unborn babies, infants and young children and at other times in a person's life.  I do feel somewhat frustrated by comments such as 'If they were that bad why don't we all have cancer now?' or 'Why aren't we already dead?'  It is quite clear that the adverse impacts of these pollutants are cumulative and may take some time to manifest, particularly the negative impacts on human reproduction and, incidentally, fish reproduction as well.  However, I think anyone working in the field of reproductive health would be able to clearly state that fertility rates are falling and there is a growing number of infertile couples seeking reproductive assistance.  Whether this is because of these organic pollutants - it seems there is a lot of evidence that it is - we need to take it seriously.  It is an agonising path for some couples trying to achieve a pregnancy.

The other concern is that these toxins may bio-accumulate on the ocean floor if adequate dispersal does not occur.  This will result over time in an accumulation in the fish and birds that feed in the area.  As these toxins may take many years to break down they remain in the food chain and eventually end up at the top of the food chain on our tables.  I fully appreciate that modern pulp mills do not produce significant levels of dioxins and furans and there have been significant improvements over the last 20 years in this area.  In the absence of adequate hydrodynamic modelling that clearly shows that adequate dispersal will occur, how can we be sure this will actually occur?  Whilst we have been informed that hydrodynamic modelling will only require finetuning, we certainly cannot pre-empt the results.  As the Director of Environmental Management, Warren Jones, said, he does not have a perfect crystal ball.  Unfortunately I do not have a crystal ball at all so I am searching for the answers.

There was a comment made in the SWECO PIC recommendations and in various other places about management plans.  I appreciate the management plans including plans to deal with emergency responses, accidental spills, hazard management and others are often not developed this early in the process but I do have some concern about the number of plans that are required at crucial points and the need to ensure these are adequate.

**Ms Thorp** - We have plenty out at EZ too, management plans.

**Ms FORREST** - Plenty of what, sorry?

**Ms Thorp** - Management plans to deal with problems.  It is fairly standard for -

**Ms FORREST** - I know, but there is an awful lot and the demand on the department to go through them and make sure they are up to speed is going to be a big task.  The work does not stop here for the regulatory bodies.

**Ms Thorp** - I would rather have it that way than the other way round where there are too few.

**Ms FORREST** - At the moment there are too few but they will come, yes.  I do think some of the important management plans could have been in place at this point, Mr President, but that is open to debate, obviously.  It is a concern that the number of plans that are going to be needed at various steps along the way will again stress the departments in overseeing all of this.  I am well aware from the briefings too that if I feel there needs to be a particular aspect to one of these plans or even the permit conditions that are being set along the way that establish the permits, I can make a written submission to the Department of Environmental Management and it will be taken seriously, I am told.

The member for Huon, or it might have been the member for Rowallan, mentioned that the overseas delegation felt that it was important that the two incinerators were continuously burning during the commissioning phase at a time of high risk of odour events.  That is one thing that would certainly need to be included.  It does not appear at this stage but hopefully it will be included in those operating conditions when they are established.

The other area that was highlighted by SWECO PIC and certainly needs close scrutiny when the plan appears is accidental spills.  Accidental spills could be anything from not your cup of tea so much but certainly chemicals and some quite dangerous chemicals.  There needs to be a very comprehensive management plan to deal with those sorts of problems.

I am not an economist at all - in fact I prefer to steer away from economics as much as I can - but I would like to make a few brief comments with regard to this.  We have had a number of briefings about the economics of this pulp mill and again we have had quite opposing views in this area as well so it is not just scientists, it is economists too who cannot seem to agree.  It depends on where you start from sometimes.  One big project such as this would be perhaps quite vulnerable to the exchange rates and commodity prices.  It is a bit like putting all your eggs into one basket so that if there is a significant downturn in pulp prices or the dollar changes - we were talking at one stage about price parity with the US dollar or value parity.  I think if that actually happened it could threaten this project.

**Ms Thorp** - I think you would be in more trouble trying to sell woodchips.

**Ms FORREST** - I am not arguing that, I am just saying that we are potentially starting off a new development here that essentially is putting all your eggs into one basket.  It is a very vulnerable position to be in but that is a call for the proponent.

**Mr Parkinson** - They are a very diversified company.

**Ms FORREST** - I agree.  The other issue is that new technologies continue to emerge in the pulp and paper industry and we have seen this very clearly in the last 10 to 20 years.  There will be an expectation and I would suggest a requirement that the proponent be required to install these new technologies as they come online and they are proven to be effective.  The only problem with many of these new technologies is that they are usually available at significant cost so if this requirement is imposed, will it result in a project potentially becoming unviable in the future?  We do not have a crystal ball.  I think that it bears consideration.  Whilst clearly this is an issue for the company to consider more than us, it is a matter I believe that should form part of this debate and our decision making.  I, and I suspect other Tasmanians, would expect this constant upgrading of technology and further reduction in emissions as part of the project and it should be part of this approval permit in a number of areas.

We see that there are requirements to upgrade or consider emerging technologies in some areas in those permits, not particularly related to pine but you can infer that from it.  I said previously that continued economic growth is vitally important to this State and we must do all we can to encourage development and investment in Tasmania to ensure we continue to see economic growth in this State.  I know that the Treasurer expects 3 per cent economic growth this financial year without a pulp mill and 3.5 per cent with one, though his figures were disputed by an economist the other day.

**Mr Aird** - I am going to talk about that.

**Ms FORREST** - Are you?  Okay, I look forward to that.

**Mr Aird** - Others have already made good comments about it.

**Ms FORREST** - So are you agreeing or disagreeing?

**Mr Aird** - What, with Graeme Wilson's statement?

**Ms FORREST** - No, no I am talking about people who said there was going to be greater economic growth than you are predicting.  So do you disagree with them as well?

**Mr Aird** - I have not seen that.  Who said that?

**Ms FORREST** - I cannot remember now in the big scheme of things.  It was someone in the last week and a half.

**Mr Aird** - Generally figures we use are pretty conservative.

**Ms FORREST** - So one would suggest from this that he is not expecting a major downturn even if the pulp mill does not go ahead.  Point five per cent is 0.5 per cent, I admit, but I do not think that the sky will fall in, as has been predicted.  Either way I do not think that the sky will fall in.

**Mr Aird** - Who actually has predicted that?

**Ms FORREST** - I cannot remember, it was in one of the briefings over the last few days.  It was a figure that was put out in a briefing but to me that was not an important factor because we have had so many conflicting economic analyses of this that I was not going to take another one in and try to retain it.

**Mr Aird** - There is little doubt that this will have a major economic benefit for the State.

**Ms FORREST** - I am sure that you will refer to that in your contribution.

**Mr Parkinson** - I have seen only one conflicting report and that was Wells.

**Ms FORREST** - As far as the issue of investor confidence goes, I believe there is more than one way this could go and whether or not this project is given the approval of Parliament.  If this project goes ahead, I do not necessarily think that all potential investors and developers out there will suddenly say Tasmania is open for business.  I believe that if they have watched this whole sorry process they may be more inclined to think that our planning and approval processes are such a mess, just look at the pulp mill process, and do they really want to put themselves through that?

Clearly we need to have a good, hard look at the RPDC and other approval processes to ensure that we can provide an independent, effective, efficient and rigorous assessment process that will achieve an outcome for a developer in a timely manner.  Alternatively, if this pulp mill is not approved and therefore not built, I do not believe that potential investors will say or think, 'Well, that is it.  Tasmania is closed for business' because it was all too hard for this particular proponent.

I think that they may well look at it in a way that says that clearly Tasmania has high standards and we need to be sure that when we go with a development application we have all the relevant information.  However, this will only be the case if we can ensure that the assessment process is independent, effective, efficient and rigorous and can deliver an outcome in a timely manner.

Another issue that has been raised by a number of economists and employers is the potential significant upwards pressure on wages in light of the current skilled worker shortage.  This adverse impact on other businesses and industry current and emerging, expanding or ready for start up is a real and important issue.  Some advocates for this mill have not really considered or factored into their calculations this issue with regard to the economic benefit, I believe.  The fact that this has been overlooked is a real effect of a lack of an integrated assessment process and the complete absence of a social and economic benefit and risk analysis.  These important considerations would have been considered with such an approach, I believe, and once we stepped away from the RPDC process that is what we did and the integrated approach was no longer an option.

Just commenting briefly on the SWECO PIC report itself, this report basically stated the proposal could proceed to Parliament for consideration even though it did not meet all emission guidelines.  Mr President, there has been argument whether this should or should not have been the outcome of this assessment.  However I see this somewhat as an effective handball of the project to the regulators or the relevant persons and the Parliament to do the work that has not been done.  Effectively it then fell to the regulatory bodies to prepare permits and conditions to ensure that the emission guidelines could be met.  I, and many other members of parliament, stated that the pulp mill should be supported if it meets the rigorous and high standards of the emission guidelines that were prepared through the RPDC process.  That is now a challenge to see that it actually does.

When we consider the impact on other industries in the region, a number of these industry representatives and individuals have made representations to all members during this process.  It must be stated that the proposed pulp mill, if built, will be built on an existing industrial area and, as such, is not an unreasonable proposal, however the fact that other industries in this area do release emissions and pollutants into the environment is not a reason to say that that makes it all okay.  I mentioned that previously.

Any new development, regardless of size, pollution potential or other aspect must be assessed against the current requirements and only approved if the residual impacts are acceptable.  If another industry is producing more pollutants than this mill will, I do not believe this is a reasonable excuse for rejecting or supporting this pulp mill.  What we are being called on to decide is whether this pulp mill should proceed under the conditions and permits before us.  If another industry in the area needs to be tightened up or needs to smarten up their act then this is a separate issue and hopefully it will be addressed through the establishment of the much anticipated and often promised independent environmental protection agency.

I fully support the establishment of an independent and inclusive EPA, an agency with teeth that will act in this area without fear or favour.  However, even though this has been promised, we should see the establishment of an environment protection authority before the end of the year, we do not really know what it will look like and whether agreement can be reached on all matters of concern but it is certainly far from a done deal at this stage.  I therefore find that I need to make my decision here in that knowledge and to fully consider how the EPA will work when we have the opportunity to see what it will look like and how it will function.

The other coexisting industries that have been established and grown in the Tamar Valley over many years have raised some concerns, some based on their understanding of the problems associated with old pulp mills, some based on recent experiences in the same industries in other parts of the world that coexist with modern pulp mills.

The concerns have been raised by tourism operators, wine makers, agricultural businesses including fruits and berries, seafood, meat and other produce and I do not believe these concerns are unreasonable in any way, Mr President; all they are wanting is answers, a lot of these people.  Unfortunately, it would appear that the Government and the proponent have been somewhat slow to react to their concerns and it does not enhance the relationships or work to effectively allay concerns.  When people have invested significantly financially and emotionally in their business venture and fear that their profitability or even their viability may be under threat, I do not believe it is unreasonable to expect these people to be engaged early and issues identified and serious consideration given to the concerns they have.  I understand that the wine industry is still concerned.  They have had correspondence back from the Minister for Planning discussing a number of their issues, and they still feel there are a lot of areas that are not completely covered off.  I guess that is a work in progress.

Mr President, labelling some of these people who may well be responding out of fear as misguided or uninformed is less than helpful.  To illustrate this point, I wish to quote from just one of the thousands of e-mails and letters I received as other members also did.  This is a randomly selected letter that I received this week.  As the member for Rosevears discussed, there were many well-considered opinions and genuine people from all walks of life who are concerned and who have not had the benefit of hours of briefings or the opportunity to visit mills as I and others have.  So whenever we get a letter such as this we need to bear in mind that they have not had the briefings that we have had.  This is from Mr Bill Carney who lives at Riverside, in the member for Rosevears' electorate.  He starts off making a comment about the overseas fact-finding tour:

'You no doubt now will be more aware that local opposition to this proposed mill stems from genuine concerns about perceived detrimental effects on the environment and lifestyle amenities we in the Tamar Valley now experience.  Although far from perfect, there is no excuse for adding to whatever shortcomings that may already exist.

Hopefully, you and other MLCs will realise the majority of us who oppose a pulp mill at Long Reach are not just misguided opponents of everything developmental.  Indeed, it is foolish in the extreme for those in favour of the mill to brand people with genuine concerns as anti-development, or "anti‑anything" as the Premier tends to.'

That is a handwritten letter, Mr President.  I do not often get handwritten letters but I have got a few.  I think it takes more effort to write a handwritten letter than it does to do it on a computer, spit out 10 and send them off, or press the button on your e-mail.  It is very easy, as we have noticed over the last week.

Mr President, it may only take one tainted fish, abalone, scallop or even wine shipment from this part of Tasmania to taint or seriously damage the entire export market in these areas.  I know this sounds dramatic, but the export market does not see Tasmania as a big place with more than one area of significant size that the fish, wine or other produce may come from.  Anything Tasmanian, regardless of where it comes from, will be seen in pretty much the same light in the view of the overseas export markets.

Mr President, it was interesting to note on the overseas trip to the Nueva Aldea mill that was originally to be called the Itata mill that this is the one where the vineyard had the problem with the wine order being rejected.  Originally the proponents were going to call the mill the Itata mill or something similar to that, because it is in the Itata region and on the Itata River.  However, the existing wine makers of the region requested that the name be changed because they feared for the name; the wine industry was going to be impacted adversely.  They promoted their wine as being from the Itata region and they felt this could impact on the brand, for want of a better word, that they had in their area.  The company obliged.  They took that on board and they changed the name to Nueva Aldea mill which means new village, which is a nearby village in town.

So this does highlight perceptions about the potential impact in the minds of these people and the fact that the company  acknowledged them.  We do need to take it seriously and accept that these people have real concerns.  This mill is not called the Tamar Valley mill, so there is not a problem, but it does illustrate the depth of concern in some of these people's minds.  It is very hard to tell whether it is perception or reality at times.  One can become the other.  I accept the concerns of these and other industries and businesses are genuine, and feel that many of their concerns would be addressed through this permit.  It is some of the unknowns that are still causing concern.  Some of these will not be fully addressed until, for example, further hydrodynamic modelling is done and baseline data is collected to ensure adverse impacts can be identified early.  Mr President, I will speak briefly about transport too.

**Resumed from page 33**

[2.33 p.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, before lunch I was talking about transport and I wish to make a few comments in relation to that in regard to this proposed pulp mill.

Mr President, as part of our briefings, and I have mentioned it already, we had a briefing from DIER - the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources - who reassured us that our major highways, including the Bass and Midland highways, could easily cope with the extra 95 and 90 truck movements a day respectively that this proposal will result in.  However the preferred rail option, and it is preferred by both the proponent and the Government, would see a significant reduction on these roads.  People might ask why these roads, and that was a question that was raised in the briefings, if these roads are the ones that would have extra traffic going to the pulp mill from the north-west and the south of the State.  The amount of traffic in the north-east would not increase particularly because of the pulp mill itself but may increase as a result of the resource coming online.

We were also informed that the push for the rail upgrade was not reliant on the success of this proposal.  The funding will still be sought under the AusLink funding regardless of the outcome of this debate and this was very welcome news indeed.  The rail does require significant upgrade, particularly up through the Midlands, and it is part of the Government's plan to improve rail links in the north and the south of the State.  I think that is an important point to remember as well.

What was not acknowledged or really considered in this briefing was that whilst there may not be a significant increase in log truck movements from the north-east as a result of the mill, there will continue to be a high number of log trucks on the roads in this area, roads that struggle to cope with the traffic at the moment, especially for the trucks that use the narrow and windy roads that make it almost impossible to drive on without crossing double white lines at times.  These roads are more often local government roads than State-owned roads and hence this may be the reason they were overlooked.  This problem has also been highlighted with log cartage from the west coast when the logs have been transported from Strahan to Scottsdale.  It is certainly no fault of the truck drivers that they cannot drive safely on these roads.

It is simply a fact that these roads are not designed for this type of traffic and log trucks physically cannot stay on the left side of the double white lines.  Another issue that appears to have been overlooked in this assessment process is that there are many main roads in the north-east, which is also an issue, with an increase in general traffic as well as log truck traffic and other trucks.  With the extra thousands of people who will be in the region during the construction, I can fully understand the concern of locals and the concerns of the members for Apsley and Rosevears, who I am sure have had many representations, as we all have, from concerned residents and tourism operators in the region.

They may take some comfort in the Leader's comments in his speech with regard to some commitments to, or at least recognition of, the need to spend considerable money to upgrade roads that need attention.  Whether or not this pulp mill goes ahead, I suggest the proof will be in the pudding.  I am sure that the member for Apsley will have something to say in her contribution to this debate.  One other aspect of transport that I do not believe has been considered, and it is only a minor consideration perhaps, is that if the pulp mill is established there will also be the trucking or transporting of pulp from the Bell Bay mill to the Burnie paper mill for paper making.  And if that is trucked, that will be on the roads between those two areas.  I acknowledge that the Bass Highway has capacity to take extra traffic but it all adds up over the long term and it should be considered.  However, if the rail option is successful I imagine that this will be carted by rail because the rail goes right through the Burnie mill.

I want to focus a little bit on health, as you would expect that I would make some contribution regarding health in this debate.  The health of all Tasmanians is of utmost importance and concern for all.  In briefings provided by the Department of Health and Human Services we were informed that the permit as it is prepared is, and I quote from Dr Roscoe Taylor, 'likely to provide for the protection of public health.'  'Likely to provide' does not give a great deal of confidence as we seem to be hearing these terms 'likely' or 'unlikely' in relation to a number of issues, particularly health-related issues.  Any threat to public health must be taken seriously and I am sure that this is the case.  Concerns expressed by health professionals and the AMA should not go unheeded but it should always be remembered that reason can be cast aside when fear overtakes the debate.  This is why these discussions need to be based an evidence and science.  This also presents its own challenges, as the rigour of scientific investigation usually requires isolation of issues to eliminate potential confounders.  Thus, a large number of potential health and safety issues which frequently interact in real life can become so dislocated from each other in the research literature as to be almost unrecognisable as a whole conglomerate.  This makes the synthesis of the research a huge task.  The application of that research to local situations and populations is yet another complex task.  Rushing such tasks merely overlooks, blurs or minimises risks rather than recognising, quantifying them and discovering whether adequate and desirable strategies to deal with them currently exist.

In the area of research into health impacts of pulp mills there have been some overall reviews performed.  However, due to the extensive nature of these they are published as books, often, or stand-alone documents rather than in scientific journals where there is simply not enough space to deal with the complexity of the numerous issues.  This reduces their online accessibility but I have had some assistance from some of those in the medical profession to review as much as possible in a short time the current research that is out there.  This significant amount of literature here is just some abstracts of research that has been conducted with relation to impacts of pulp mills, particularly in the 1990s and in the early 2000s.  The most recent research was 2004, there is some for 2003 and the majority is in the mid to late 1990s.  Some has been in 2000 as well so we are looking at modern pulp mills in a lot of this research.  A lot of it looks at workers in pulp mills rather than the public which is just as important.  The people who work there need to have good health outcomes, as well as those who live around it.  There is so much there that it is a little bit hard to sift your way through.

The literature, according to this review of all those abstracts and a reading of some of the articles, suggests that pulp mills' numerous inherent major health risks have been increasingly recognised over recent years.  A number of the risks are geographically affected; thus each potential location for a mill is different from others.  This has generated enormous public concern worldwide, which is now a recognised phenomenon of extensive social discontent.  That is why I think we have seen so much angst in the Tamar Valley region.  There are very few pulp mills built in a place with the same geography and weather conditions.  You can apply all the research you like but you have to apply it in a way that is meaningful to the area.  It makes it hard to judge what might or might not happen and this is one of the concerns of the medical profession in the area and the AMA and the people who live there.

I think we need to take note of the concerns of the medical professionals, particularly the respiratory physicians and those doctors who treat people.  We know that the gas emissions and particulate matter that will come out of the mill, even though it is in small volumes, can increase the incidence of asthma, respiratory ailments, cardiovascular disease, immune responses and that sort of thing.  We cannot ignore it and we need to take it seriously.

The public concern has generated progress in technology which has provided options that reduce some of the risk to the public but it has increased the complexity of the processes, expense of monitoring and, to aim to achieve zero discharge, potential increases in risk to workers.  The industry has been recognised to have incentive to bypass several of these measures to the detriment of public health in some cases.  Governments in several nations have been recognised to have little incentive to perform the difficult and often unpopular - unpopular to industry, that is - task of regulation.  Thus even while technology exists to reduce the risk to humans and the environment, it is often not used or adequately regulated.

Gaps still exist in the important areas of literature in this regard.  The concern to the public regarding the location of the proposed pulp mill in the Tamar Valley was supported, as the topography of the area, the climatic and meteorological aspects, including the well known inversion layer, do present challenges that may not exist in mills in other parts of the world.  This was borne out in my investigations attempting to locate other mills in areas or situations similar to the Tamar Valley.  They are certainly few and far between.  Therefore it is difficult to equate research outcomes from this proposed mill, particularly with regard to the impact on health from air emissions.  This remains the case even in the light of recent advances in pulp mill technologies that will be employed at the mill.

ITS Global, who have the task of conducting a social and economic benefit analysis, did have a cursory look at impacts on health services in this region.  If we were assessing benefits of this proposal, as was their task, there are very few, if any, benefits in health terms if this development were to go ahead.  The ITS Global report does show the negative impacts to health services, particularly in the construction phase.  It is a qualitative report rather than a quantitative report so you are looking at commentary rather than numbers.  We see that the impacts on demand for health services, such as GPs, specialists, optical, physiotherapy et cetera, on a regional level during operation is negative, but they consider it not significant.  On the local area it is negative, but the significance of impact is low.  They are not saying it is not significant, it is just low.

We are looking at an area in Launceston that is struggling with its health services at the moment, if you are to believe the local paper and the other members who represent the area.  If you look at their comments in relation to the construction phase at the same measures - increased demand for health services, GPs, specialists and the like - on a regional level they say the impact is negative with a low significance, but on the local area it is negative with a moderate significance.  If we look at increased demand for emergency and medical support services - hospital and emergency care, ambulance and SES - on a regional level it is negative, but of low significance.  They are all negative in these important areas that people rely on.

If we look at increased demand for other social services, such as mental health, crisis counselling, emergency housing services, legal services, aged care, child care and family care, they are considered negative and significance is low.  But if you are the person with the mental health problem, it can be quite big to you.  It might be low overall, but the individuals out there needing the support and help would perhaps disagree with that.

When I say this is a cursory glance at the impacts on the health services in the region, I want to quote from the ITS Global report again.  Looking at regional impacts it says here:

'Launceston will be the focal point of the regional impacts.  Services currently available' -

and this is under health again -

'that may be affected include' -

I will not read all the dot points but the two of note here are:

'a 300 bed, 24 hour public hospital with emergency service facilities and two private hospitals (bed capacity unknown)'.

Mr President, I would have thought if you are undertaking a report of this nature to really look at what is important and what we need to consider in doing an analysis you would ring up the hospitals and say, 'How many beds have you?'  Surely that is important if you are going to bring 1 000 workers into the area.

The next point is:

'ambulance services with full time paramedics (resources unknown); medical centres and a large number of GPs (resources unknown)'.

One call to the Division of General Practice would have given those numbers.  So on just that point alone it is inadequate.

**Mr Dean** - The Launceston General Hospital wouldn't know from day to day.  It changes every day.

**Ms FORREST** - It does change every day, but overall you can get a picture.  You can ask for a trend, but clearly the Launceston General -

**Mr Dean** - The trend isn't going down.

**Ms FORREST** - It is struggling and that is for a variety of reasons, Mr President, but we do not need to talk about that now.

It is not evident that the increased costs associated with these negative impacts on health have been considered either and, as I said, it has not been any more than a brief cursory glance.  To really do a proper analysis you would need to factor in the increased costs associated with the negative impacts of health that are identified in the report.  They are not denied.  It says that there will be negative impacts but there is nothing that tells me they have considered the cost of this or what we need to do about this.

**Mr Parkinson** - I would have thought with your knowledge of the health sector you'd have no concerns whatsoever.

**Ms FORREST** - I have plenty of concerns, more than you would want to hear about at the moment.

**Mr Parkinson** - Are you suggesting the Launceston General won't be able to cope with the influx?

**Ms FORREST** - You can have a discussion with me any time about that.

**Mr Parkinson** - Well, is that what your suggestion is?

**Ms FORREST** - I am not suggesting anything.  I am suggesting that the ITS Global report identified there would be a negative impact.  It has not been costed in any way.  They had a cursory glance at health impacts and I think they have undervalued the impact that it will have.  That is what I am saying in relation to the report.

**Mr Parkinson** - A negative impact could be something as simple as a few extra injuries to be dealt with from a large workforce.

**Ms FORREST** - It could be, but they have not looked at it.

**Mr Parkinson** - A few extra cases of sickness.

**Ms FORREST** - I will move on, Mr President.  I think this is a debate for another time and perhaps another place.

These permits and conditions were provided by the relevant persons or the regulatory bodies after considering the consultant's report in what has been confirmed by some as being an almost impossible time frame.  I am sure that many of these relevant people have been working day and night to reach this point.

During briefings from the various departments we were advised that the permit itself was not a statutory document, as the regulatory bodies were limited to preparing conditions and permits related to the project under the relevant acts, similar to what they would have done under a normal approval process.  The capacity to make recommendations beyond that under this process does not exist.  The power to recommend did exist under the RPDC assessment process but it does not exist under this process.

As there is no requirement for any other information to be presented to Parliament other than the permit which contains the conditions relating to the relevant acts, I have appreciated the extensive briefings that we have had over the last week, many provided by these relevant people we are talking about.  The departmental representatives have been very informative and willing to answer any questions and have been quite patient and generous with their time, following up on issues of concern and returning at a later time if necessary.  I certainly thank them because without that there is no way  any of us could have been anywhere near ready to debate this within the five days that we have.

It did raise the question on a number of occasions about resourcing within the departments and the capacity of these bodies to meet the task ahead should this project receive the required approval this week.  It was stated that some departments would be required to put on extra staff during the construction as well as the commissioning and operational phase.

Mr President, this process has already had a negative impact on some departments during this process.   Due to the enormous workload that has been thrust upon these regulatory bodies, other routine tasks have been set aside and delayed as a result.  Mr President, I would be the first to agree that the workload for these regulators has been a massive task and from here on the demands will no doubt be much less, but demands will continue as all these plans have to come in and there are all these other expectations that are imposed through the permit.  So the workload might reduce but it is still going to be significant.  However, I do not believe it is reasonable that one project should chew up all the departments' resources to the detriment of others in the community who need the services of various departments.

Even if it may seem to us that the only thing going on in the world at this moment is a pulp mill proposal, life does go on in other parts of the State and particularly in my electorate of Murchison.  In fact, the pulp mill does not really rate much more than a blip on the landscape up there.  What my people up there are more interested in is building dams and the dairy farmers are wanting to build dams to drought-proof their properties, particularly in light of the improved dairy prices.  Some of the farmers in my region who have been wanting to have dam applications approved have been told they just have to wait because everyone is tied up with the pulp mill process.  So, time goes on; they have to wait; meanwhile the season passes and potentially an opportunity is lost.  I am not making this up, Mr President; it has been confirmed through the department and also with the minister.  Whilst I acknowledge that the workload of these people has been enormous, I think we need to remember there are other things going on in Tasmania still; there is not just one thing.

I raise this point to highlight the fact that the departments certainly do not appear to have extra capacity and I would like some assurances, I guess, and this is one of the points the Leader might like to note down, that the ongoing monitoring of the operation of this mill, if it proceeds, will be accommodated either within existing allocations or through appropriate increasing in resources, human or otherwise, where necessary.  We do not want to see other projects faltering or delayed because the regulator is so busy with this project.  If it is online and being monitored, that is going to be an enormous task as well.  I guess the question is, what other projects, applications, monitoring or approvals to name a few, would be delayed if departmental officers are tied up in dealing with the possible events such as we have seen over recent months, but obviously to a lesser degree?  Of course, an increase in resources within government departments comes at a cost to the taxpayer but members of the public have rightly asked if this extra cost should be borne by the proponent.  I believe you could consider this in a couple of ways.  If a proponent was to finance the extra requirements of the regulatory bodies, would the work to be done be seen as independent of the proponent, remembering that perceptions and reality are often not the same, or rather they can be exactly the same but perceptions can also become reality in the minds of observers?

This is one of the big issues in Chile, as I understood it, where the company funded much of the testing and compliance orders of the Nueva Aldea mill.  Also, when they appointed auditors, the Government actually appointed an independent auditor.  The auditors were selected by the Government from a group of auditors nominated by the company.  The locals wonder whether this is really an independent audit, and you can understand why they think that.  It is best to have a completely separate independent process there.  Even though much, if not all, of this work was undertaken by independent people or organisations within Chile, the perception in the community was quite different and it did not enhance the company's relationship with the community at large.

One of the conditions in this permit is to establish a community consultation and communication strategy.  I would hope that this would include establishing a community representative group to advise the company on matters of concern.  This is not specified in the permit itself but is an important aspect of community wellbeing identified by the Director of Public Health, Dr Roscoe Taylor.  This is also an important step in taking the community with you because the lack of trust due to perceived lack of independence and transparency in some of the regulatory functions will be a huge challenge.  Therefore it may be reasonable that extra resourcing required by the regulatory bodies and potentially the EPA when it is established should be met by the taxpayer.  So again, there is potentially an extra cost to the taxpayer in this process.

Just touching briefly on the issue of sanctions for non-compliance, this is another area of concern for a number of people.  The sanctions and penalties can only be imposed as per the relevant act, I understand.  Some of the penalties that can be imposed under these relevant acts do not come with very significant financial or monetary sanctions.  In situations that do attract high sanctions it is usually necessary to prove malicious intent or negligence, which can be very difficult to prove.  The use of common law options can also be challenging for individuals who may have a cause for concern.  Therefore these sanctions and penalties seem insignificant to the mind of many and unlikely to significantly impact on a company financially unless there are many such breaches.

Mr President, I appreciate this is not a part of the permit conditions which are limited to relevant acts governing the construction and operation of this project but I do believe that these issues should be noted and considered and again the Leader might share his thoughts on this issue in his summing up.

The issue of the ability of enforcing the permit has been raised by concerned members of the public and other members.  I do not doubt that the regulators will act appropriately and particularly the Director of Environmental Management who operates at a level above ministerial influence.  However I would like to quote from an e-mail I received concerning this matter as I do believe the views are legitimate and based on personal experience.  This is an e-mail that I received from John Ryan who is an electrical engineer.  He has vast experience particularly in power, oil and gas nationally and internationally and he also has some experience in pulp mills.  His major concern was that new industries, whatever they are, whether they be gas, oil or power that he has worked in or pulp mills that he has also worked in are not usually a problem.  It is when they start getting on in years and the maintenance becomes an issue and a costly part of the operation.

I will read from his letter:

'I am a professional electrical engineer with over 40 years experience in a wide variety of industries concerning paper mills.  This experience has shown me first hand that where there is any conflict whatsoever between production, and therefore profit, and respect for the environment there is no decision to be made in the minds of company management.  It is always profit at any cost.  Operating permit conditions, and the ineffectual policing of them with no more than token punishments, mean nothing to CEOs of companies'.

I am not saying that that is my opinion, I am saying that that is this man's opinion.  He has worked in the field, he has been in the area so I believe he is just highlighting - and I did talk to this gentleman after he sent the letter - the concerns he has that you can have really good regulations and a good regulatory body but decisions need to be made regarding whether we spend this money to protect the environment or could we get away without it.  You tend to take that path.  He also did recommend reading for all members a Dr Seuss book called the *The Lorax* which I have not read.  It is one of the Dr Seuss books that I must have missed but anyway I will get it and have a look at it.

**Mr Parkinson** - The *Turtle* is a good one.

**Ms FORREST** - Have you read it?

**Mr Parkinson** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Is it good?  Do you like *Green Eggs and Ham*?  Or *The Cat in the Hat*?

I also received an e-mail from an occupational health and safety assessor and when I went back to look at it again I could not find it in my vast amount of pulp mill e-mails.  I should have done something with it at the time but I thought I would come back to that one.  Anyway, this lady has worked in occupational health and safety areas as an assessor of many big industries and her comment was that in her experience there are always attempts, if there are problems going on in some of these industries, for the management to steer the assessor away from that.  Once you have been in the industry a long time you know what you need to be looking for so she was not fooled but there is always that pressure to try to perhaps hide what is going on so you can hopefully fix it up before you actually see it so that you do not get a black mark against your name.  They are just two people's opinions from experience within the field just to highlight, but there are concerns in the community and I have some concerns myself about how this will work on the ground.

Before summing up, Mr President, I would like to comment briefly on the document tabled by the member for Rosevears yesterday that was prepared by Miotti Consulting.  As I said, it was as late as yesterday and we are still getting documents as long as this.

**Ms Thorp** - It's worth reading.

**Ms FORREST** - It is, but it does not have page numbers so I cannot tell how many pages are in it, but there are a lot.  It is probably about 80 pages because it goes up to 77 and then stops numbering.

This is an independent assessment that was prepared for the independent members of the Legislative Council - 'Peer Review of the SWECO PIC report with particular regard to the identified non-compliances with the Tasmanian Guidelines'.  Both the members for Elwick and Rosevears gave a good overview of Roberto Miotti's credentials and capacity to comment on the SWECO PIC assessment and also his intimate knowledge of the emission guidelines.  I will not try to redo that because I do not have anywhere near the information that they do about that.

[3.00 p.m.]

I certainly have not had time to study this report in any detail but I want to comment on some of the findings.  It is set out in a fairly easy-to-read way.  I think that the member for Elwick touched on some of these in his contribution, but there are a number of areas that have not had permit conditions attached.  I would imagine, because of his earlier involvement in the RPDC process, that this man would have the capacity to make an assessment such as this.

When we get back to he said, she said and no-one can agree, it does make it difficult, but I am willing to take this man at his word in this regard.

**Mr Parkinson** - It is a useless report.

**Ms FORREST** - That is your opinion, and I will give you mine.

**Mr Parkinson** - It is useless because it does not give any recommendations.

**Ms FORREST** - Accepted modern technology to control emissions to the atmosphere, marine environment and land will be mandatory.  This is D.1.1 in the SWECO report and this was not assessed at all.  That is one of the areas that I raised about the accepted modern technology to control emissions that has not really been looked at.

**Mr Parkinson** - It does not make a recommendation on the pulp mill.

**Ms FORREST** - You can answer this in your reply, you go right ahead.

**Mr Parkinson** - Did you notice that when you read it?

**Ms FORREST** - In your reply you can make a comment about this.  I am making mine now.

**Mr Parkinson** - Did you notice that when you read it?

**Ms FORREST** - Accepted modern technology for the reduction of emissions to the atmosphere - total reduced sulphur (TRS); spot monitoring program, and his comment was 'not assessed by SWECO PIC because the "documentation required for this assessment is yet to be finalised by the proponent" '.  There are some of his points that were perhaps not relevant in my mind, but I am not an expert in the field as this man is.

In D.1.4 Table 2 is stated the guideline requirement AMT for the reduction of emissions to the atmosphere, nitrogen oxides - NOx - from the power boiler.  He does talk in this area about some of the new technologies, one being selective  non-catalytic reduction.  From my research and representation from a number of people, this is something that is out there that is perhaps not quite refined but it is something that seems to be the way of the future and it does not seem to be being considered through the permits and conditions that I have looked at.  Again we have only had five days to digest this, seven by the time you count the weekend.  Some of those issues may have been covered off in some other conditions within the guidelines.

In D.1.9 Table 4 the guideline requirement AMT for the reduction of emissions to the marine environment; chemical recovery and handling of accidental discharges; spills, leakages and releases of process liquids and solids.  The comment he makes is this:  can the permit conditions resolve this?  'Yes, the proponent should implement these plans and procedures before the start-up of the mill'.  This is where I was saying that some of these management plans need to be in place really early on because it is not just spills and leakages of chemicals you are using at the time of production; potentially during construction you have other harmful substances too.

There are some areas there that have not really been covered off.  There are some that I do not think are particularly relevant, but that is me.  We then go to the hydrodynamic studies and hydrodynamic modelling in D3.14:

'This section of the Tasmanian Guidelines states "It is expected that the studies will require the use of a hydrodynamic model and appropriate wind, current and water density measurements to determine the effluent dispersion characteristics under a variety of weather conditions, and allow for seasonal variability" '.

He has said that yes, it can be met with permit conditions.  It has been mentioned in the permit, but the timing of all this is such that, if is not in place now, how can we be sure that we are on the right track here?  It is of little comfort to have the mill substantially built and then find these problems later.

There are other things in the body of the document that spell those out more broadly, but I will not go right into that.  In conclusion, this assessment process we now find ourselves in is for both the proponent and the Government a very high-risk process.  We can only accept or reject the permit before us.  If I, and I expect others, are not satisfied that all the issues of importance have been covered off adequately, then the permit must be rejected.  There is no other option.  My visit to pulp mills overseas did demonstrate that modern pulp mills have come a very long way from the polluting mills of the past.  Different bleaching and other processes have significantly reduced the emission of pollutants, including the most toxic substances, dioxins and furans, into our environment.  The issue of potential impacts of ultra-fine particles, or PM2.5s, is now recognised and monitored and we await the establishment of an international standard for emission limits rather than just the advisory limit we now see.

Unfortunately this current assessment process is narrower and has not been an integrated process.  This has resulted in some aspects that would have received attention under the RPDC assessment process not receiving full consideration.  I also believe that under the RPDC process, which unfortunately could not meet the time frames demanded by the proponent, we would not be facing the absence of some of these vital assessments.

One of these particular issues that I and others have identified is the inadequacy of the hydrodynamic modelling.  This has been identified by almost every assessment process.  Even under the current permit before us, in the minds of many it remains a concern that it may be inadequate, that  the permit conditions may not be going far enough to really look at where this effluent may go.

Another is the issue of waste water dioxin and furan emission limits, particularly related to the issue of bioaccumulation.  I am well aware that modern pulp mills, utilising modern bleaching technologies, result in very low levels of dioxin and furan production and waste water treatments also see much improved technologies for the removal of these substances through the filtering of suspended solids and organic matter to which these toxins cling.  However, the inadequacy of the hydrodynamic modelling does not provide me with the comfort I need at this stage.  Even the Director of Environmental Management stated in a briefing that it would be good to have this modelling done so that you could provide these answers before we got to this point.

I appreciate that the conditions require further modelling to be undertaken.  However, there are some concerns that what is proposed in this permit's conditions may not provide all the necessary data to fully assess this body of water.  I also believe this information should have been available before this important decision was made and approval given.  More time to consider this may have revealed some definitive details.  The lack of management plans in a number of key areas is also a concern and, whilst the permit does require these to be developed during the process, I would have expected to see a number of these readily available prior to approval being granted, particularly surrounding mill operation and safety, but also during the construction phase.

With regard to atmospheric emissions from the chlorate plant vent gas scrubber, chlorine dioxide plant vent scrubber and the bleach plant vent, the Director of Environmental Management stated that these emission limits could not be determined at this stage, as the Government does not have enough information about the final processes of the chemical plant.

Combined with the comments I have just mentioned with regard to the report by Miotti Consulting, for me there are a number of issues that would and should have been addressed more fully with more time.  With regard to the chemical plant, I would have thought that if the two treatments were both considered options and the one that is being undertaken is an accepted modern technology in every sense of the word, then those limits should already have been able to be set.

I have some concerns about the transport issues not being adequately addressed,  certainly not through the permit before us.  The concerns of wine growers, many tourism operators and primary producers in the area have also not been adequately addressed through this process.

This is probably the result of the nature of this assessment process which we are now dealing with, a process which I admit I did support some months ago.  I hope the Leader has some information and assurances regarding these issues in his reply, and with regard to the outcome of this debate I will certainly accept the consensus view of this House.

I have sought advice from many experts in the field during the course of this debate.  These experts have come from a wide range of backgrounds.  Some are very pro-pulp mill and some are very opposed.  Many of the experts I have consulted have no particular bias or view or any direct interest in the project at all, but they do have significant knowledge and experience in the area.  I have listened to all of them, Mr President.  Some will agree with my decision, some will not.  Members of the public are in the same situation.  There will be those who think I have made the right decision and there will be those who disagree.  My only hope in this process is that, whether people agree or disagree with my decision, they will acknowledge that my decision was not made lightly.  I hope that they will appreciate the length of inquiry I have gone to to make my decision, as evidenced by my contribution.  This has been a highly emotive debate and has gone on for some time.  As I have stated, there will be people on both sides of the debate that may disagree or agree with aspects of my contribution as well and indeed my decision.  However, as I said, this decision is not made lightly.  My decision has been extensively researched and considered and has not been based on emotion.  Rather it has been based on scientific research and the considered opinion of a variety of experts in the field.

In making my decision there is no question in my mind that we are considering a state-of-the-art technology in this proposal and this proposal is based on an accurate scientific basis.  I would be happy to support this motion if I could be convinced the permit before us would fully address the issues I have identified as I have only one option here to decide - whether I accept or reject.  On balance, in spite of what would seem to be the strictest operating conditions of any development or industry in this State, I do believe there are a number of outstanding and critical issues that have not been adequately addressed and these I have discussed.

In the long journey getting to this place I acknowledge that had these issues been adequately addressed, I may well have been making a different decision.  Therefore, in the absence of any new or compelling arguments from other members or the Leader, I will not be supporting the motion.

Upcoming Events