

LAUNCESTON'S AIR POLLUTION

Since about 1993, Launceston's winter smogs have improved with less air quality exceedences occurring especially during the last five years.

Backyard incinerators, agriculture and forestry exacerbate the smog problem, especially during the autumn months. Because of Launceston's location in the Tamar Valley, our city is uniquely subjected to frequent low level atmospheric inversion layers during the winter, which greatly increases the concentration of smoke particulates in the air that we breathe.

The smog that you see over Launceston during winter is caused by tiny particles of fine particulates (floating in the air, making the air dirty, spoiling the view and causing health problems).

Particulates larger than 10microns in diameter are generally caught by the hairs in the nose and eliminated by coughing or sneezing. However particulates of 2.5microns or less can be inhaled right down to the alveoli (air sacs) in the lungs, causing breathing difficulties and sometimes-permanent lung damage. The particulates are invisible to the naked eye, but they can do a lot of damage to your health.

One Micron = one thousandth of a metre

Wood smoke can emit harmful chemicals such as: Acrolein, Formaldehyde, Carbon Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides, Volatile, Organic Compounds, Dioxins, Furans, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons.

Exposure to these chemicals through winter smogs can cause premature death, breathing difficulties; asthma, increased hospital admissions and increased respiratory problems. Those who suffer the most are children, the elderly and people with chronic respiratory problems.

INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION

Industry also pollutes particulates into the Launceston air shed, and there is a need to ensure they operate under the best available technical systems. This will ensure that they meet world's best practice to bring them up to a standard of operation acceptable to the community.

The LEC has called for on behalf of the community:

- Tighter controls over wood fired boiler's feedstock
- A reduced period for meeting the low emission standards
- Tighter regulations on re-finishing and operations of the boiler on forecast 'moderate' and 'bad' smog days.



BACKYARD BURNING

The issue of backyard burning is still to be resolved in the Tamar Valley. For example; the West Tamar Council has no regulations at present on backyard burning and the Launceston City Council has a bi-law that only partially restricts this activity on certain days of the month, irrespective of air quality.

The LEC believes this is out of step with the communities' expectations, and that there is a need for everyone to play a part in reducing the known sources of high particulate emission levels that affect our health and quality of life.

Launceston's Wood heater Buy Education and Buy Back Scheme

The Launceston City Council together with Environment Australia commenced an education campaign for the operation of domestic wood heaters and a buyback scheme in 2001.

For more information view the following links:

Airwatch - www.airwatch.gov.au

Tasmanian Airwatch - www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au



LEC SUBMISSION TO DRAFT TASMANIAN AIR QUALITY STRATEGY 2005

The LEC has recently submitted comments to the Draft Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy (August 2005). For more information on the draft strategy, use the DPIWE web-site link listed above.

The following document contains our submission - [Tas Air Quality Strategy Draft 2005 Sub.](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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