

Submission to clean air for all Victorians statement-June 2018

All Victorians deserve the right to clean air.

On the 21st April this year in Toolangi State Forest. I had driven into Tanglefoot picnic area. It was busy that day, people were having picnic lunches and there was a group who were setting up tents in order to camp for the night. I was there to take some photos along the walking path nearby, but as I got out of my car I heard a helicopter up above. It appeared to circle for a while, and then I heard a siren call. Shortly afterward a plume of smoke arose from the vicinity of the nearby logging coupe 'floater'.

I spoke to a few of the people in the camping ground who were surprised that a post logging burn had been scheduled for that day. I struggle to understand why this was conducted on a weekend let alone why it needed to happen in the first place.

All the while the nearby plume of smoke was steadily growing, reaching higher and higher into the atmosphere. This was taking place around 500 metres away from a public recreation area on a sunny afternoon in Autumn. People were having their lunch in the presumption that they were safe. I had remembered seeing one of the characteristic plumes as I drove into the forest earlier but reckoned that the first one was nowhere near where I was headed. This burn at Tanglefoot was now the second that day. I drove past the coupe later that afternoon to see what had happened as the smoke was still hanging in the air. Driving past 'floater' a bit further down the road I was shocked to see yet another huge plume of smoke rise into the air quickly becoming larger and larger. As I stood on the side of the road with the huge plume from the coupe 'floater' behind me and the new plume in the east ahead of me it almost seemed that the 2 smoke plumes would start to meet in the air above me. That made 3 coupes being ignited in Toolangi on the one day. I wondered about the campers, surely the smoke from the fire would settle on the ground as the campers were sleeping, surely that is subjecting them to harmful smoke, surely our government would not allow this to happen.

Speaking to some of the VFFM staff as they were leaving for the day I was informed that they expected the smoke to settle on the ground over night. I returned the following day and Tanglefoot picnic area was deserted. Around at 'floater' the acrid smell of smoke hung in the air with some of the piles of 'slash' still smoking.

I returned to "floater" 5 weeks later and the piles were still smoking. How much air particle pollution would have been emitted from this one logging coupe?

On March 1st this year the Air Quality Index was 901, (150+ is very poor as you know). This was no bushfire and could have been avoided. Warnings went out for affected people to stay inside etc. Why were people forced to

moderate/change their behaviour because of these industrial post logging burns?

What do you think are the best value actions listed in the statement that are likely to help improve air quality?

*Enhanced monitoring of air pollution- this is a mitigation approach, better than nothing but not the best solution.

Air pollution needs to be dealt with at the source.

How would you build on these actions?

Air pollution monitoring stations need to be installed in regional areas. It is no longer acceptable to knowingly subject communities to what can only be described as mass pollution events.

Do you have any suggestions for further actions?

A coordinated transparent approach to preventing air pollution is needed. Communities and individuals should not be unaware of the dangers of air pollution.

Are there any air quality actions that you believe should be avoided?

Why?

Post logging burns are a major risk to the health of Victoria's regional Melbourne based communities and hence should be avoided.

Are there any particular areas of air quality (either pollution sources or geographic regions) you think the government should target for improvement? Why?

The Hazelwood mine fire is a prime example of the need for a fair and transparent air monitoring system. The subsequent closure of the Hazelwood Power station provided an opportunity to move Gippsland bravely into a 'clean air future', however the recent announcement of a waste to energy plant at Australian Paper in the Maryvale paper mill is a cause for concern and would be a backward step in this regard. The building of what is ostensibly an industrial scale incinerator should be avoided not just for the health of Gippsland communities but for communities that are now seeing their forests disappearing on the back of a truck and subsequently subjected to toxic post industrial logging burns.

Are you able to provide any data or information that will help government assess the feasibility and cost effectiveness of air quality management actions?

Personal air quality monitors could be a good option in the absence of permanent monitoring stations.

Do you have any suggestions on how to secure a clean air future?

- *Transition the timber/pulp industry to plantation and stop clear fell logging of native forests.
- *Cease post logging burns, regeneration could be done by hand, we shouldn't be putting the health of whole communities at risk.
- *We must have strong pollution laws with no exemptions!
- *Give the EPA the power to enforce breaches.
- *Emissions from industrial clearfell logging should fall under the jurisdiction of the EPA.
- *Cost should not be an issue when the health of communities is at stake. You cannot simply 'handball' the costs of air pollution to the health system.
- *Building a plant to burn waste to energy should be subject to rigorous examination.
- *We know that renewable energy is the way of the future, coal pollutes and is harmful to health, leave it in the ground where it belongs.
- *Maintain the current moratorium on CSG.

Yours Truly
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Please find photos below



