

Protect our Lifestyle and Strengthen our Community

Tasmanian
Liberals



Improving Pesticide and Chemical Monitoring in Tasmania

A Hodgman Liberal Government will...

A Hodgman Liberal Government will overhaul the pesticide monitoring system in Tasmania to ensure the collection of accurate data to better understand patterns of chemical usage and to assist in the mitigation of any possible environmental and human health issues.

We will also commit to examining the current regulatory settings to ensure the system is based on good science and adequately protects human health, the environment and the users of these chemicals.

Why this policy is needed

Our monitoring process needs to be overhauled to ensure that it is effective and targeted, based on science, good reporting practices, risk assessment and a focus on getting the best environmental and health outcomes for Tasmania.

Even the General Manager of Biosecurity and Product Integrity from the Department of Primary Industries and Water has conceded the system is not ideal. He has been quoted in the media (The Australian 21 April 2009) that the sites tested were not necessarily the best for detecting contamination: *"Monitoring sites exist because they are sites surveyed for other purposes. If you wanted to look at triazine contamination you would want to look at different sites."*

While the scientific community is yet to reach conclusive agreement on these matters, there is growing concern in the community about the potential effects of pesticide and chemical contamination on human and environmental health. In order to respond to this concern and base an assessment soundly on scientific monitoring we must be vigilant on the extent of any waterway contamination. We must have up to date measurement of what is being found in our waterways and ground water, but also link this data to known patterns of usage.

We will also assess the viability of a pilot program of 'marking' user's chemicals to identify where chemicals are coming from should they be detected. This may help us to identify the path chemicals take through the environment.

Should a renewed science-based pesticides monitoring program reveal ongoing problems of concerning levels in particular waterways or catchments, the improved data will allow the Government to work with chemical users in the area to progress mitigation techniques and ensure better outcomes for all land managers, the environment and human health.

Leadership and vision for the future

Authorised by Will Hodgman MP, Parliament House, Hobart TAS 7000

Protect our Lifestyle and Strengthen our Community

We need a clear picture of where and to what extent chemicals are present in our environment so that we can approach mitigation strategies from a factual, and not emotive, standpoint. Results of testing must always declare the extent to which the amount of any particular contaminants compares with the relevant applicable national standard.

A Hodgman Liberal Government will work constructively with all stakeholders be they recreational, Local Government, agricultural or industry users and regional water authorities, together with key health and environmental organisations. We will do this to develop robust, science-based approaches to improve risk-based chemical monitoring and reporting, complemented by improved education, information and enforcement.

Education is a critical part of chemical use. It is vital that all chemical users, in whatever industry, have a thorough understanding of chemicals, their application, and their movement through the environment. It is also important that the wider community is informed so that chemical users are not unfairly accused of causing water contamination.

Continued development of programs which predict the optimum application times should be pursued.

What this policy means for pesticide and chemical testing in Tasmania

This policy requires a rethink of the current testing regime. The new testing process should be based on a risk assessment that considers testing based on the following grounds:

- Identification of industry and agricultural sectors with a known or likely propensity to use pesticides and other chemicals and their relationship to waterways;
- The chemicals likely to be in use and their characteristics with regard to mobility;
- The historical data of chemicals used in catchments;
- The seasonal factors that may influence possible contamination such as rainfall and patterns of usage;
- The sensitivity of the surrounding environment and pesticide use is included in integrated catchment management plans. It should consider the likelihood that any water contaminated above acceptable levels may be digested or make contact with people;

A risk assessed, strategic approach to testing is far more likely to give an accurate picture of the scope of chemicals in our environment than the current regime. This information is essential if we have any hope of understanding the potential human and environmental health problems that may be caused by recreational, agricultural and industrial chemical usage and any necessary chemical policy reforms that may ensue from this, for example chemical substitution. Improved risk assessments, testing and reporting must be backed up by real action. Effectively dealing with this issue requires improved education and information for users, neighbours and the community as well as increased capacity to properly investigate potential complaints and incidents.



Leadership and vision for the future

Authorised by Will Hodgman MP, Parliament House, Hobart TAS 7000

Protect our Lifestyle and Strengthen our Community

A Hodgman Liberal Government would therefore increase funding to a revamped Spray Information and Referral Unit, currently within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, to provide additional staff capacity and an improved spray referral hotline.

After more than 11 years of Labor ...

The issue of dangerous chemicals cuts across three Ministerial portfolios and none of the responsible Ministers appear to have the issue on their radar.

Last year the Environment Minister claimed that she is “quite convinced” that Tasmania’s pesticide regulatory measures are up to scratch. This claim conflicts with the publicly stated view of her own departmental officers and the stance of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, who have said that chemicals should not be present in ground water (chemicals were detected at several ground water test sites in 2009).

If a senior responsible officer has conceded the testing regime is less than optimal then it is the responsibility of the State Government to seek improvements, which it has failed to do.

Not only is the detection of chemicals in our watercourses potentially damaging to the environment and our brand, but there are many people in the community who are increasingly concerned about the possible impacts on human health – Labor has ignored this but a Hodgman Liberal Government will not.

The policy offers a real change and a better monitoring regime into the future.

Costings

	2009/10 \$'000s	2010/11 \$'000s	2011/12 \$'000s	2012/13 \$'000s
Improve testing regime for chemicals and pesticides in Tasmania’s waterways	100	500	175	175



Leadership and vision for the future

Authorised by Will Hodgman MP, Parliament House, Hobart TAS 7000