

MEDIA RELEASE

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FORREST FOCUSSES ON FOREST FIRES

Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest has highlighted the concerns of many Tasmanians that forestry burn off smoke is affecting the health and safety of all Tasmanians. Forest burn offs this year, as in other years, aggravates the nerves and health of the residents and has forced some to move out of their smoked filled houses.

“In recent days. Gunns forestry burns have resulted in smoke so thick in areas of the West Coast and Circular Head, that visibility has been reduced to only a few metres at best, with the obvious traffic hazards and increased health risks particularly for children, pregnant women and anyone with pre-existing lung disease” Ms Forrest stated.

Ms Forrest was alarmed to be informed of the disturbing fact that there is no organisation responsible for monitoring of the volume of fire permits issued at one time in the North West and West Coast region.

“The current climatic conditions including the extended dry summer and the reduced time frame for conducting forestry burns, has seen the intensive burning in many areas, but the fact that there is no department responsible to monitor the number of permits provided at any one time is unacceptable and must be addressed” Ms Forrest stated.

The Department of Environment has informed Ms Forrest that currently no air monitoring is conducted in this region because the equipment is very expensive and not always portable.

“The health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians must be considered and air monitoring conducted in any area subject to poor air quality. It is unacceptable that the North West Coast is not being afforded the same level of service other parts of the State and the Minister for the Environment, Paula Wreidt, must act to address the health and safety of all Tasmanians” Ms Forrest stated.

“A spokesperson from the Minister for Environment’s office stated that new equipment is being purchased to monitor the Tamar region in relation to the proposed Pulp Mill project, some of which will be portable and will therefore be useful for next years burn period, however this provides no comfort to residents of the North West Coast who are suffering health and safety issues now” Ms Forrest said.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.