Submission to the Clean Air for NSW Consultation Paper

NSW EPA and OEH on behalf of the State of NSW.

59 Goulburn Street,

Sydney NSW 2000

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on Air Toxics, one the most important health issues this century.

POST LOGGING BURNS and SMOKE

I am going to concentrate on the volatile smoke emissions resulting from NSW Forestry Corporations addiction to lighting fires, burning the logs and the forest debris left behind after the loggers are finished with the forests and plantations.

This results in massive emissions, and detrimental air pollution.

During the forestry burning of the [REDACTED] Forest, in [REDACTED] 2016, my health was adversely affected. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I am appalled that forestry is permitted, and has a legal exemption, provided by the EPA, to burn freshly logged trees and forests. These trees in the photos of [REDACTED] forest had only been cut a month before, despite EPA law stating that the ‘public’ must not burn green wood in their heaters. Here we have the government forestry corporation breaching government recommendations.
Each burn can cover hundreds of kilometres, which affects the health of everything living on the planet, and the atmosphere. This destructive practice results in the death of live stock, wildlife, water ways and humans –nothing is exempt or can escape from the smoke that blankets towns, valleys, cities, farms, schools and hospitals!

**The dangerous ‘smoke’ is highly toxic cocktail consisting of** -

- Carbon monoxide
- Ozone
- Nitrogen dioxide
- Particulate matter
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
- Organic compounds
- G.H.G.

The vast volumes of smoke produced by Forestry are not reported or documented in NPI data, therefore the NPI data is not a true representation of the pollution within Australia.

I would like a written response in relation to how the regulatory authorities document and report on -

1. The air quality before and after burns.
2. Smoke distance measured.
3. Why there are no actions currently ‘under development’ given the seriousness of this issue.

I can find no records or reports by OEHS or EPA on this important pollution issue, which must monitor microns to the smallest amount of 1 PM, not just 2.5 and 10PM.

Forestry fires emit a huge amount of dangerous emissions, which are not counted by regulatory authorities.

When I reported to the EPA, that the forestry smoke was affecting my health, and that of my pet’s health, the woman on the desk was dismissive, and said that because I was too far away from the fire, I could not report it.

I tried to reason with her, but she wouldn't take my complaint.

The next day I was still having chest and breathing difficulties, and so was my dog, so I rang EPA again, and got a different woman who took my formal complaint seriously. She was horrified when I told her of my suffering. I rang Rural Fire Service, head officer and he agreed that the smoke was from forestry burning, and definitely would travel down the valley to me.
The EPA, OEH, and any other regulatory authority pertaining to this issue urgently needs more funding, training, education, and staff to monitor accurately and safely. NSW Forestry Corporation’s appalling practices in relation to smoke and fire issues must be stopped.

I have also reported several incidents to the regional EPA officer, [redacted].

Please refer to his response below.

Dear Ms Jones,

I refer to your email of [redacted] 2016 providing photographs of smouldering windrows in the [redacted] State Forest.

As advised in my email of [redacted] 2016, the burning of windrows from harvesting of plantation timber is permitted under the Protection of the Environment Operations (Clean Air) Regulation 2010 (the Clean Air Regulation). The EPA is satisfied that, to date, the burning of the windrows in the [redacted] State Forest has been in accordance with the Clean Air Regulation.

Please note the EPA will only investigate issues associated with burning in the [redacted] State Forest if there is substantiated evidence that the activity is not being carried out by such practicable means as are necessary to prevent or minimise air pollution. The EPA will also consider reasonable expectations in the circumstances.

If you have evidence that any future burning is not being conducted in accordance with the Clean Air Regulation please provide the evidence to the EPA’s Environment Line at info@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Regards,

[redacted] EPA Manager North Coast Region

After almost one month, the windrows lit by Forestry Corporation on [redacted] are still alight, and smouldering despite a total fire ban.

The inconsiderate burning of our public forests and trees is a disgrace and I haven’t taken into account the dangers and un-reporting of air toxics in relation to hazard reduction burns.

Please take all I have said extremely seriously.
As you know the morbidity study conducted after the forestry fires that occurred near Sydney in April 2016 highlighted the catastrophic effect of smoke on humans.

14 people were killed, hundreds were hospitalised, and 1000s affected from cardiovascular failure, aggravated asthma and decreased lung function.

Yours in Good Faith

Catherine Jones