



MEDIA RELEASE

26 July 2006

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The Tasmanian Conservation Trust seems to have hit a raw nerve with yesterday's media release on the threat to seals dolphins and other marine life in Bass Strait. Usually it takes days, often weeks, to get any sort of response from Government. But yesterday, our media release went out at about nine in the morning and the Premier's office had put a response up on the Government website during the afternoon. (The text of this is at the bottom of this document.)

The response indicates that the Premier and his office are not only very sensitive about persistent organic pollutants, they appear to be getting bad advice about this issue.

The Trust has participated in the RPDC process in the past and certainly intends to submit a formal submission to this body on this as well as other issues.

However, the threat of persistent organic pollutants has been raised with the RPDC before and the response by the Gunns Integrated Impact Statement has been totally inadequate. The public is entitled to know about these shortcomings, particularly as the Gunns documentation is likely to be difficult for many people to access.

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust is not even in a position to comment on the proposed monitoring program for persistent organic pollutants as this has not been finalised according to the Gunns Integrated Impact Statement.

The Trust's expert scientific advice is that the concentration of persistent organic pollutants in the pulp mill effluent is much less important than the total quantities of pollutants that actually enter the environment and the pathways they follow once they enter the marine ecosystem. The best way to detect persistent organic pollutants is by monitoring for them in the environment.

However, the most glaring omission in the Gunns integrated impact statement, as well as previous RPDC documentation and the Tasmanian Government's approach to this issue, is the lack of any explicit commitment to stop pulp mill operations if a problem with persistent organic pollution or any other serious problem, is detected.

If the Tasmanian Government is truly confident that there will be no detectable persistent organic pollutants in the pulp mill effluent, then there should be no problem about it making a commitment to have this as a condition of the operation of the pulp mill right now.

If persistent organic pollutants will not be a problem for the environment, then there should be nothing to stop the Tasmanian Government from:

1. committing to a monitoring program that is capable of identifying pollution by persistent organic pollutants, and
2. giving an assurance that if pollution by persistent organic pollutants from the mill is identified, mill operations will be stopped until the pollution problem can be fixed.

These are basic and commonsense commitments that should not require advice from the RPDC.

Further information:

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Text of *Premier Lennon's Media Release*:

Pulp Mill Assessment

Tuesday, 25 July 2006

The Tasmanian Government has encouraged the Tasmanian Conservation Trust to put its suggestions concerning the proposed Bell Bay pulp mill to the appropriate planning authority – the Resource Planning and Development Commission.

Premier Paul Lennon said he was surprised the Conservation Trust would try to pre-empt the outcome of the rigorous analysis by the RPDC by asking the government to introduce legislation now on the basis of a hypothetical.

“The RPDC has given organizations like the Trust more than two months to make comment on the Integrated Impact Statement.

“The Conservation Trust knows this process well. They know they have an opportunity to make comment on the IIS and offer suggestions on how the mill, if approved should be regulated.

“ I have made it clear from day one that this government will abide by the outcome of the RPDC approval process and will accept its recommendations.

“I have absolute faith in the RPDC to make the right decisions based on fact, not hearsay.

“If the Trust has concerns, it should put those concerns in writing and have them assessed by the experts.”

Mr Lennon said the fate of major projects should not be decided by politicians acting on a whim.

“I note, however, that there is considerable evidence provided by reputable organisations including the International Working Group on Persistent Organic Pollutants (PoPs) that shows that the adoption of elemental chlorine free (ECF) bleaching technology means that the PoPs that the Trust is concerned about cannot be detected in pulp mill effluent,” Mr Lennon said.

Further information:

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