

Review of the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy

September 2011

Introduction

Purpose of the review

In 2006, the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy was established under the *Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality) 2004* to guide the management of air quality in Tasmania over the period 2006 - 2011. This review presents an overview of the extent to which the objectives identified in the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy have been implemented over that period. The review also provides some recommendations as to which objectives should continue to be addressed in any future Strategy, which have been successfully addressed and which are no longer required.

This review has been undertaken for the EPA Board, Senior Management and the Implementation Steering Committee members.

Aims of the Strategy

The aim of the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006 (Strategy) was to establish a blueprint for measuring, improving and managing air quality in Tasmania for the five year period from 2006 and 2011. The primary driver for the Strategy has been the recognised need to achieve the National Environment Protection Measure Goals for air quality, especially those relating to fine particle pollution. Fine particles are recognised as a significant atmospheric pollutant that has the potential to adversely affect many of our urban population centres during the winter months.

Background of the Strategy

The Strategy was established under the *Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality) 2004* to guide the management of air quality in Tasmania over a five year period. Its drafting was a collaborative effort between representatives of various Government Departments, the Local Government Association of Tasmania and local government authorities. Input was also received from a wide range of other organisations both within and outside of government and included industry groups, and community organisations. A draft version of the Strategy was released for public consultation in October 2005. The strategy was amended, where appropriate, in accordance with comments received during the public consultation period and officially launched in June 2006. The Strategy was scheduled to expire in June 2011.

The primary focus of the strategy was on ambient particle concentrations in the atmosphere. While air pollutants, including such air toxics species as nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides, have been included in the strategy, particles have been determined to be the key air quality issue for Tasmania and are the main cause of poor air quality in the State. As a consequence of this focus, the primary objective of the Strategy has been to achieve compliance with the National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure Standard and Goal for PM₁₀ particles, in line with the stated requirements of the Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality) and within the context of:

- Tasmania *Together* Targets and other relevant Tasmanian programmes and objectives;
- national programmes to develop PM_{2.5} Standards and Air Quality Standards for Air Toxics; and

- other relevant national policies and measures including the National Environment Protection (Diesel Vehicle Emissions) Measure and the National Woodheater Action Plan.

The Strategy established 6 main topic areas, each with a number of sub-ordinate objectives and associated programme statements. The main topic areas are:

- Information and Data Gaps
- Residential Sector (woodheaters and backyard burning)
- Industrial Sector
- Planned Burning
- Transport Sector
- Integration of Planning.

The structure of the Strategy is such that many of the objectives and programmes relating to each of the main topic areas are well-defined. Several of the programmes required the development of legislation, physical systems or management systems to facilitate their implementation. Other programmes required the development of information and resources to educate groups, and to promote or facilitate actions by non-government agencies in order to fulfil the stated objective.

Where direct government control could not be achieved, resources were provided to assist non-government agencies achieve those objectives relating to the improvement of environmental performance or the implementation of actions or infrastructure intended to reduce the atmospheric impacts of specific activities. No timeframes were set in the Strategy other than the projected lifetime of 5 years.

Summary of Implementation to Date

The majority of objectives defined in the Strategy have been implemented or are being implemented primarily through activities undertaken by the EPA Division. An Implementation Plan was developed to schedule and track the implementation of the Strategy objectives and associated programs (see Appendix). In 2008, the Implementation Steering Committee (ISC) was established to facilitate and drive the implementation of strategy objectives. The initial members of the ISC included Ian Abernethy (Launceston City Council), Martin Bicevskis (DHHS), Liz Gillam (Local Government Association of Tasmania), Matt Davis (DIER), Coleen Cole (EPA), Bob Hyde (EPA) and Georgina Scott (EPA). In 2010, several of the initial members of the ISC either retired or changed due to redeployment within their respective agencies. The ISC members consists of Peter Button (Launceston City Council), Stuart Heggie (DHHS), Rosalind Harrison (DHHS), Ben Mooney (Local Government Association of Tasmania), Felicity Edwards (Hobart City Council), Coleen Cole (EPA), Bob Hyde (EPA) and Ellis Cox (EPA).

Some of the key objectives that have been implemented include:

- The achievement of the PM₁₀ Air NEPM goal of 5 exceedences or less per year in Launceston for the years 2007-2010;
- The development and release of the *Distributed Atmospheric Emissions Regulations* in 2007 including:
 - regulation of the manufacture, import for sale and sale of woodheaters;
 - an objective test to assess excessive woodheater emissions; and

- restrictions on backyard burning ;
- Upgrade of the air monitoring stations at Ti Tree Bend and New Town, along with the relocation of the Hobart station from Prince of Wales Bay to New Town;
- Commissioning and launch of the George Town air quality monitoring station in 2007;
- The availability of air quality data from the two NEPM stations on the EPA Division's web site;
- The expansion of the air monitoring network in the Tamar Valley and the establishment of the BLANKET state-wide network of air monitoring stations;
- The installation of the Macquarie Street CO monitoring station, within the Hobart CBD, was completed in December 2010, and the station was commissioned in January 2011.
- The development of the Coordinated Smoke Management System (CSMS) in collaboration with Forestry Tasmania for the management of smoke from planned burning.

Further details about the implementation of each objective can be found in the attached appendix A.

In 2009, several outstanding objectives were identified, primarily dealing with residential and transport emissions. It was decided by the ISC that the outstanding residential objectives would best be accomplished through a working group. In 2010, the Home Heating Working Group (HHWG) was established to consider a set of objectives identified in the Terms of Reference developed for them by the ISC. Members of the HHWG included John Todd (Chair), Rod Taylor (Aurora Energy), Stephen Waight (Tasmanian Climate Change Office), Derek Walter (EPA), Mike Power (EPA) and Ellis Cox (EPA). The group met on four occasions during 2010 and early 2011. A final report containing the working group's recommendations for the implementation of the objectives deferred to them was completed in August 2011 and is attached at appendix B. It is intended that the recommendations of the HHWG be considered by the TAQS ISC for inclusion in the next air strategy.

At the end of the period of the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006 the ISC identified several of the objectives defined under the initial strategy that have not been adequately implemented, some objectives that are no longer applicable and several instances of duplication in the objectives and sub-objectives.

Some of the objectives that have not been adequately implemented include:

- Development of an Air Pollution Potential Atlas for the State;
- Determining trends away from woodheating, identifying the barriers to change and investigating the trend in reduction of woodheaters across the State;
- Investigation into a redeveloped woodheater buy-back scheme;
- Improve woodheater installation practices and promote cleaner technology woodheaters and fuels derived from wood waste;
- Reductions in the emissions from vehicles by:

- promoting the uptake of fuel efficient vehicles including hybrid cars; and
- Investigating the means to optimise the use of rail for the transport of freight.

Future Direction

The period of operation of the TAQS recently concluded and many of the objectives identified in the Strategy have been successfully completed. Of those objectives successfully implemented by the EPA Division several have ongoing operational requirements. These include the NEPM air quality stations in Hobart and Launceston, the BLANKET network of air monitoring stations located throughout the State, the George Town Monitoring Station and the Coordinated Smoke Management System. It is envisaged that these programs will be sustained into the future.

The objectives of the strategy that remain outstanding are still considered to be relevant to the management of air quality in Tasmania and their implementation is required. The EPA Division is in the process of developing and implementing the Domestic Smoke Management Program (DSMP) which is intended to address the outstanding objectives of the strategy related to domestic wood smoke emissions. The outstanding objectives addressing air quality issues in the areas of transport and planning should be referred to the Departments that are best placed to expedite their implementation. The TAQS Implementation Steering Committee will be retained to provide advice and assistance to agency representatives tasked with the implementation of the outstanding objectives.

In November 2010, the Environment Protection and Heritage Council endorsed the development of a new strategic national approach to air quality, integrating air quality standard setting with available and feasible actions to reduce pollution (and exposure to it) so as to maximise the net health benefits to the Australian community using least cost measures.

Consequently there is significant movement at the Federal level to revise the Air NEPM and Air Toxics NEPM which will have a marked influence on the future priorities for air quality monitoring and modelling activities in Australia. The effect of the revision of the Air NEPM is expected to result in a major change of focus towards the determination of population exposure to air pollution.

The assessment of population exposure is likely to result in significant adjustments to the current methods used to satisfy the requirements of the Air NEPM. Particles remain Tasmania's primary air quality pollutant and while it is expected that the existing network of monitoring stations will provide the basis for delivering the monitoring requirements of the revised Air NEPM, it is yet to be determined if this method will be acceptable for the determination of population exposure.

The proposed minor variations to the Air Toxics NEPM are intended to provide for additional flexibility in the choice of monitoring methods used to collect data on air toxics chemical species. The increased flexibility and potential reduction in the costs associated with monitoring for air toxics will influence the scope of future air toxics programs.

Also at the Federal level it is expected that the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) list of Priority Issues of National Significance for the COAG Standing Council on Environment and Water will include the development and implementation of a National Plan for Clean Air to improve air quality and community health and wellbeing.

The Air Thematic Oversight group (Air TOG) is accountable to the Senior Officials Committee of the COAG Standing Council on Environment and Water for delivering the National Plan for Clean Air.

Recent indications from the Air TOG are that the National Plan for Clean Air will need to be delivered within three years, ie before the end of 2014.

As a result of the various influences on future air quality policy indicated above a new TAQS will not be developed at this time. Instead the existing strategy will be retained to serve as a vehicle to drive further air quality management programs, to facilitate the implementation of those objectives that remain outstanding and to support the continued operation of the established ongoing programs.

Conclusion

The Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy June 2006 has achieved great success in guiding the management of air quality in Tasmania over the five year period from 2006 until 2011. The increase in the knowledge of air pollution in Tasmania and the implementation of the Strategy objectives and programs addressing residential and industrial air pollution, smoke from planned burning activities and the development of air quality regulations have been of great importance to Tasmania's compliance with the National Environment Protection Measures for Ambient Air Quality and Air Toxics, the Tasmania Together Targets and other relevant national policies and measures.

The elevation of air quality issues at the State and National levels is expected to bring new policy frameworks and implementation plans in the near future. For this reason the TAQS will be retained in the interim period to guide air quality management in Tasmania and at an appropriate time in the future the strategy may be review and redeveloped in line with new Air Thematic Oversight group process. At that point it is expected that the TAQS ISC will convene to undertake the revision and development of objectives for a new Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy.

Appendix – IP table

The Implementation table was created to assist in the implementation of the Strategy as a record of the activities and tasks undertaken for each of the objectives. The table consists of seven column headings. The first and second columns give the objective's reference number and the objective as it appears in the Strategy. The third and fourth column describe the type of actions or tasks that should be undertaken to achieve the objective, and the outputs from those actions. Sometimes these two columns differ slightly from what the original wording of the objective is. When the table was drafted the listed programs and outputs were those which were considered to best achieve the objective at the time, however, due to certain developments and progress since then some of the actions taken and the outputs have changed and are described in the comments column. The next two columns are self explanatory listing the organisations responsible for the implementation of an objective and the current status of progress of each objective. The comments column gives a description of the activities and tasks undertaken for each objective.

For easier understanding the table has also been colour coded to reflect the status of progress of each objective.

Colour Code	Objective Implementation Progress
Grey text and white background	Implementation is complete
Green text and white background	Implementation is currently underway or has an ongoing component
Black text and orange background	Implementation has been planned and will commence in the near future
Blue text and blue background	Implementation of the objective has been referred to the Home Heating Working Group for investigation on how best to achieve the objective
Black text and yellow background	Implementation has yet to be determined by the Implementation Steering Committee