Tasmanian Public & Environmental Health Network (TPEHN)

http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Pollution_Information_Tasmania

Tasmanian Water Monitoring – another casualty of State Budget cuts

With regard to pesticide monitoring in waterways, Tasmania has now reverted to where it was in 2004 prior to the crash of a helicopter containing a number of hazardous chemicals used to spray forestry plantations in the upper catchment of the George River. DPIPWE is simply not applying water quality objectives in any catchments with regard to pesticides found in Tasmania's waterways.

In mid-October 2014, DPIPWE confirmed that they had ceased routine pesticide monitoring in waterways (including drinking and ground waters). The announcement coincided with substantial funding cuts in the recent State budget and after a round of routine ad hoc water grab sampling that paints an alarming picture of the contamination of Tasmanian catchments and therefore surface and groundwaters. (8 of the pesticides routinely monitored in the sampling programme are listed in the most hazardous pesticides used in Australia.[1])

The last round of monitoring had been in July 2014; finding the presence of herbicide **2,4-D** in 6 of Tasmania's large catchments (Boobyalla, Great Forester/Brid, Rubicon, Meander, Welcome and Clyde). The Don catchment sampling detected **metsulfuron methyl**, the Duck catchment sampling detected **MCPA,** the Macquarie sampling detected **triclopyr** and the Meander catchment detected **triclopyr**. Some catchments had more than 1 pesticide detected; the Rubicon catchment (8 pesticides detected in the sampling during the previous 6 months with **MCPA** at 19.1ugm/L in Jan[2]) - also detected **atrazine** and **triclopyr**, the Coal catchment detected **propachlor** and **propyzamide**. The sampling from the Clyde catchment - a catchment flowing off the central plateau into the Derwent River - recorded the highest level of **2,4-D** at 11.2ugm/L and also detected **clomazone** and **propyzamide**.

Despite these alarming sampling detections, with the MCPA recorded (19.1ugm/L) at possibly the highest levels of this herbicide ever recorded in Australia, DPIPWE chose to shut down the programme.

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[1] http://www.ntn.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/1.-Pesticides-report-WWF-and-NTN-20.03.13.pdf

http://www.ntn.org.au/clean-food/toxic-hit-list-shows-australians-exposed-to-dangerous-pesticides

[2] ADWG: *No occurrence data for MCPA in Australian waters could be found, however it has occasionally been measured in some Australian drinking-water supplies at concentrations generally less than 1 mg/L. In the USA, MCPA was detected up to 0.54 µg/L in surface waters and up to 5.5 µg/L in groundwater (WHO 2003).*

The Federal Department of Environment and Heritage Protection updated their paper on water quality guidelines this year http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/water/guidelines/ . It states:

"Water quality guidelines are often confused with water quality objectives. While guideline values are commonly used as the basis for water quality objectives, conceptually the two are quite distinct, as outlined by the Australian and New Zealand guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality:

'A water quality guideline was defined above as a numerical concentration limit or descriptive statement recommended for the support and maintenance of a designated environmental value. ***Water quality objectives*** *take this a step further. They are the specific water quality targets agreed between stakeholders, or set by local jurisdictions, that become the indicators of management performance.'*

While guidelines are the technical basis of objectives, final water quality objectives take into account social and economic factors and are ultimately agreed to by all stakeholders. They also usually have some legislative standing whereas guidelines may not."

Forestry Tasmania is about to increase its plantation workings and has just applied to the **Forest Stewardship Certification** (FSC) body for permission (*a derogation*) to continue to aerially spray **alpha-cypermethrin** in eucalypt plantations. FSC does not 'normally' allow **alpha-cypermethrin** to be used as it is a highly hazardous pesticide. The Tasmanian regulator (DPIPWE) allows its use in mature plantations (by aerial application) as well as in agriculture.

As of mid-November 2014, DPIPWE has not indicated if it plans any further pesticide monitoring in Tasmanian waterways and its dedicated website is still down.

Tasmanian water catchments are obviously not protected from pesticide pollution and cannot claim to allow the provision of safe, pesticide-free, raw water for any water user. It remains unclear why the Tasmanian Government is allowing this pollution to remain unchecked or how it can be sure that this level of pollution (or worse) will not occur into the future. The group at greatest risk from exposure to pesticides are children; they are exposed before and after they are born. Exposures to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) during these early life stages can have permanent and irreversible effects, with severe health consequences throughout childhood and into adulthood, and even for subsequent generations.
Despite this, Tasmania currently undertakes no mandatory pesticide monitoring of drinking water despite nearly all Tasmanian water catchments being multi-use catchments including agriculture, agroforestry with many supporting aquaculture.

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