

Fugitive odours from pulp mills

**Advice provided by
Dr Warwick Raverty**

Dr Raverty is a retired pulp and paper expert and former Assessment Panellist for the Tasmanian Resource Planning and Development Commission which was charged with the responsibility of examining Gunns' proposal for a kraft pulp mill at Long Reach, Tamar Valley, Tasmania.

Fugitive odours (foul gas) from Gunns' planned pulp mill will be detected in the air up to 55kms away eg Launceston, Deloraine, Longford and Bridport if it is built at Bell Bay. Foul gas causes nausea and headaches in most people exposed to it for long periods. It will impact on health, quality of life and businesses of everyone living within the 55km zone around Bell Bay.

What are fugitive odours?

All kraft pulp mills produce tens of tonnes of toxic gases per day that pulp mill managers refer to euphemistically as 'Non Condensable Gases', or NCG for short. In the same way that industry managers refer to 'outplacement' while workers call it 'getting sacked', pulp mill workers call NCG by its real name 'foul gas'!

Foul gas is a toxic, highly flammable mixture of:

- methyl mercaptan (one of the most offensive smelling gases known to science with an odour likened to a mix of stale sewage and rotting cabbage);
- hydrogen sulfide (rotten egg gas);
- dimethyl sulfide (a liquid that smells like rotting seaweed or burning rubber, depending on the vapour concentration, and boils at 63 degrees - very volatile);
- dimethyl disulfide (a liquid that smells like burning rubber and boils at 98 degrees).



Pulp mill photo courtesy PhotoSearch

How does the foul gas escape?

While almost all of this foul gas is collected and burned in modern mills in a 3-tier odour control system, the gas must pass through many kilometres of pipe work before being burnt.

The thousands of seals that join pipes gradually become saturated with the foul gas. It then passes through the seals into the air in sufficient quantity to surround ALL KRAFT PULP MILLS with fugitive odours, even the

most modern ones. Science has no solution to the problem of fugitive odours and none is likely within the foreseeable future.

The offensive fugitive odours causes nausea and headaches in most people exposed to it for long periods. The Stendahl kraft mill in Germany, half the size of Gunns' proposal, was trumpeted as 'odour-free' for 12 months after starting up, but by 18 months it developed odour problems and angry neighbours.

What is more, the offensive odour becomes worse as the mill grows older and pipe seals inevitably degrade, particularly in the hands of companies with poor records of engineering maintenance and no experience in the technology.

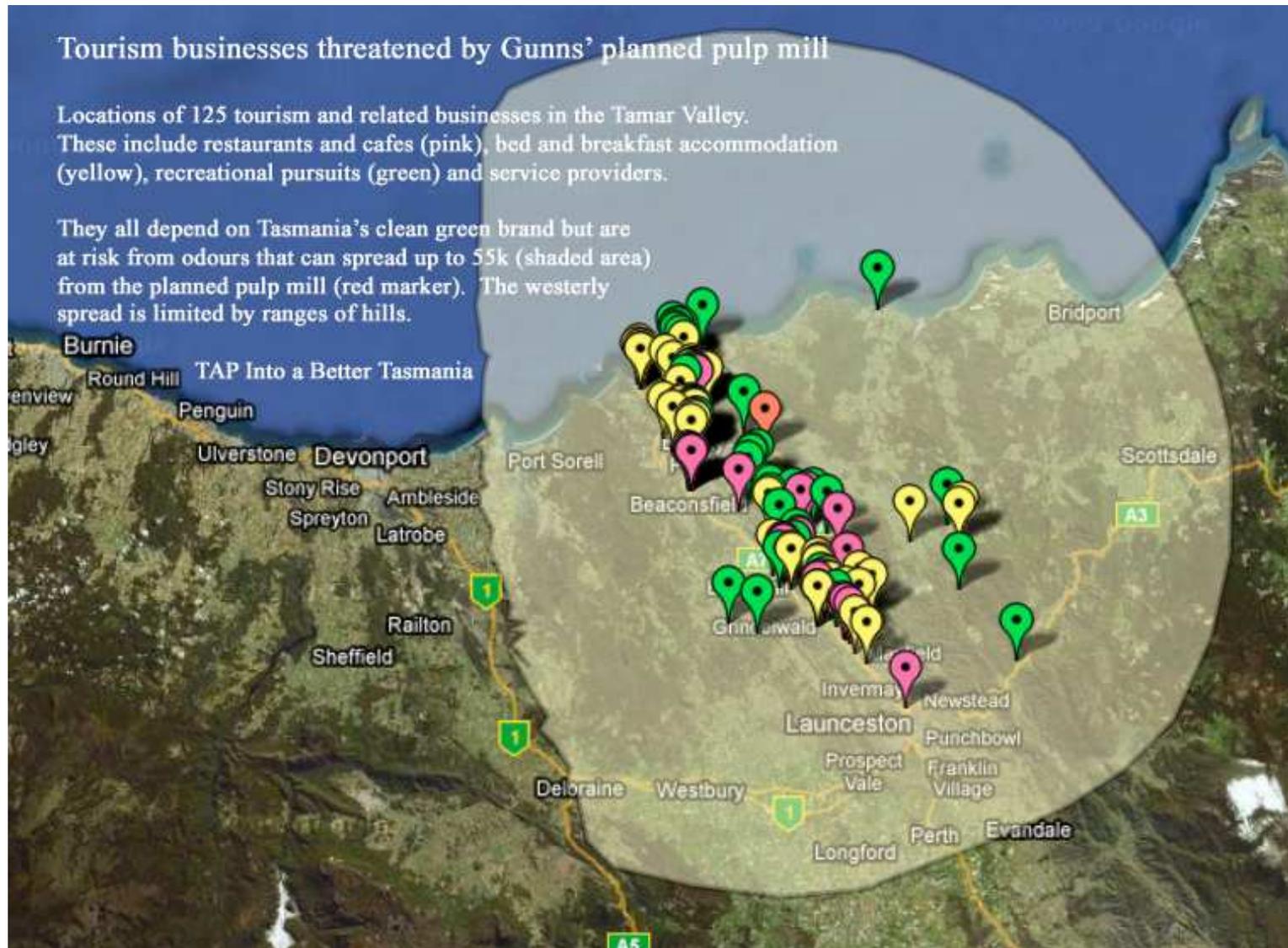
Dr Warwick Raverty said, "Gunns' management arrogantly refused to respond to repeated questions from the RPDC about fugitive odours, simply claiming 'there will be no smell from the mill' - a world first by the least experienced pulping company in the world."

"Despite his grandiose claims, Gunns' project manager flatly refused to give the RPDC a written guarantee that the mill would not smell," he continued.

What does this mean for everyone living in the 110km-wide foul gas zone?

All of the businesses on the following maps are at risk. So is the quality of life of every person living within the RPDC's designated 110km-wide foul gas zone (shaded area).

Tamar Valley tourism and related businesses at risk from fugitive odours that will leak from Gunns' pulp mill.



The map does not show tourism businesses in Launceston. In total, there are 2600 tourism-related businesses in Launceston and Tamar Valley that provide mainly food and wine experiences and nature-based activities (Tourism Research Australia, 2007). See the latest map of tourism businesses at risk at <http://tinyurl.com/ofxz5z> and click on any marker to find out more.

Tamar Valley producers of fine food and wines at risk from fugitive odours that will leak from Gunns' pulp mill.



Note: the two yellow markers in Bass Strait refer to commercial fisheries that vary in location.
See the latest map of fine foods businesses and vineyards at <http://tinyurl.com/pqjpc5> and click on any marker to find out more.