Wed 17 March: Tasmania OBSCURED BY CLOUD ... East Vic shows smoke moving NORTH EAST while UNDERNEATH the CLOUD and unseen by the camera LOCAL SMOKE ROLLED ACROSS the island.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VIC FIRES</th>
<th>TAS FIRES</th>
<th>TAS-SMOKE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat 13 Mar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun 14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 (NW)</td>
<td>? (on the way from W to NE?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 16</td>
<td>24 (W, Central, E and FarE)</td>
<td>2 (NW and Flinders Is.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 17</td>
<td>46 (W, Cntrl &amp; CN, E, FarE)</td>
<td>5 (NW and N)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu 18</td>
<td>27 (W, Cntrl, most E&amp;FarE)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the period in this chart, it can be seen that a number of fires were burning in Victoria throughout the 6 day period – Sat 13 March till Thur 18 March. They burnt from before the beginning of the weekend and continued on till after the ‘smoke emergency’ in Tasmania. More importantly, it can be seen that the two days in which smoke was widespread in the north of Tasmania, corresponded with the two days during which fires were burning in Tasmania – in the north west of the state, in the north and on Flinders I. With the demise of these Tasmanian fires, the smoke dissipated. The Victorian fires kept on burning. Fortunately we Tasmanians breathed easier – our local fires were stopped, the air cleared and we waited for the election.

Some points to note:
- the dates given above are for the date at the end of a 24 hour period in which then current hot-spots were recorded, as well as hot-spots from 12 hours and up to 24 hours previous to then. (i.e. some of the fires listed above might have been burning the day before)
- I have found no information on whether then wind directions varied according to different altitude levels.
- Sentinel has this to say about hotspots: “Not all hotspots are detected by the satellites. Some heat sources may be too small, not hot enough, or obscured by thick smoke or cloud.”
Mon 15 Mar: The weather flow across Tasmania was from slightly to the south of west. At the same time clouds over southern Victoria could be seen moving from the west to the east of Vic.

Tue 16 Mar: The weather flow across the whole of Tas. was from the W and the SW. On the mainland, cloud was moving down from the Centre from the NW, and meeting a second cloud mass south of the Bight and to the west and south west of Tasmania. Cloud flow across Victoria seemed confused, but it seemed to be moving to the east.

Wed 17 Mar: The amalgamated cloud mass to the west of Tas moved eastwards across the state. Cloud elements from Sth Aust (NW) making it down to Bass Strait, while cloud crossing VIC is ‘shepherded’ east by the SA cloud and is seen to hug the VIC coastline. (Wednesday airstream across Tasmania was W to WNW)

Source: [http://www.bom.gov.au/sat/archive_new/gms/#op1](http://www.bom.gov.au/sat/archive_new/gms/#op1)  [add 11 hours to the UTC times to get our Summertime]
Tue afternoon Mar 16 Looking West from Rocherlea. A woman told me how she had watched the smoke approach from the direction of town, and how it moved out to where she lives NE of Launceston.

The Jets were flying to Melbourne – the smoke was above the town, see how it’s clearer towards the coast. The smoke from the jets is high above the smoke. (Tue 16 Mar – late afternoon)
Gradually it moved across the town. (Tue 16 Mar – getting on to evening)

As happened two years ago, a river fog developed during the night, and the next morning, townies woke to a foggy day. It was Wednesday Morning, 17th March, 2010. Had the smoke dissipated? Was it really 'purple' fog?
“Smoke Wednesday”: But out in the country, there was no river fog to mask or to confuse - just smoke. Lilydale was badly affected: in the background can just be seen the top of Mt Arthur. This smoke was in the trees, in the gullies, to ground level. (Wed 17 Mar)

The smoke was getting worse. At recess, when the students came out to eat and have a break, it was thick enough to be able to be felt on the eyeballs and in the tip of the nose. As they came out into the ‘air’ and smelt the smoke, I could hear them complaining about it – they didn’t like it – but there was nothing they could do.
Kerry O’Brien, locked within his TV, stares out at the smoke tinged sunset.
Although Forestry Tasmania has started its controversial autumn burn off season, it said that five planned burns yesterday in the Mersey district did not produce a large amount of smoke.

(Courtesy Clive Stott, cleanairtas.com)

ABC local radio spent the day explaining firstly that the smoke had come from Colac (west of Melb). This was attributed to the Weather Bureau. Later in the day, the ABC announced that Warren Jones of the EPA had confirmed that the smoke came from East Gippsland. At the same time, it was being reported that there were no Forestry Tasmania burns on that day. This, along with Warren Jones’ ‘confirmation’ served to take the heat off FT – for about two seconds. Forestry, according to the Examiner the next day, had admitted to five burns on the Wednesday. (see above).

There is no point listing the various anecdotal evidence – we’ve read it here on TT, and we’ve all met someone who has told us how they saw it coming from the west, and how as John Hawkins wrote:

“the smoke over the Tiers on Tuesday coming from the West of Mole Creek as per my photo on Tas Times was at a height of over 3000 feet, no small bush fire but with all the hallmarks of FT and hot spot burns. This was travelling towards Launceston, slowly in an enormous mushroom that darkened the sky, this fell in the cooling night air into Launceston.”

Below see the Tas Forest Industry Planned Burns page (Courtesy: Charles & Claire Gilmour) This, according to Charles, was removed from the website at some time during that “Smoke Wednesday” afternoon. Probably when someone looked out the window and saw the smoke, or had a call from the ABC. It was Claire who had the presence of mind to copy it before it got pulled down.

Tasmanian Forest Industry

PLANNED BURNS

Forestry Tasmania burns alight as at 17/03/2010

This map shows the burns which Forestry Tasmania has alight at present. The map is updated at 5 minute intervals between 7:00am and 7:00pm every day. The date and time of the last update is shown beneath the map.
Well, there is no point in labouring the article. There were fires in Tas. Who will apologise to Tim Morris? I conclude here by presenting you with a little snapshot of what some people have to rely on when they are under smoke attack. That's what smoke does to some people. Gives asthma, and other respiratory problems. Gives us blood flow problems, pain, great pain, cruel discomfort. It is a deadly and pernicious thing, smoke and for those of us who don't personally feel affected by it, we yet empathise. It's someone's spouse, partner, child and, it could be me, could be you. Its affects can be cumulative, ready to strike.

In fact the weather bureau never actually said that the pervasive smoke down to ground level in various parts of northern Tasmania was from Colac. I heard a Bureau spokesman cited by ABC news as saying (as if in answer to a reporter’s question) that some smoke could have come from the mainland. No comment was made at that stage about whether there was smoke from local sources or not. I think there are reasonable grounds for believing that the infestation from smoke last week was a local affair, and that FT planned burns had something to do with it. Remember the Environment Minister in this state – Michelle O’Byrne. She has failed in her job – again.

-Garry Stannus,
Mon 22 March 2010