

MEDIA RELEASE



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MILL WILL MEET RIGOROUS RPDC EFFLUENT LIMITS

The proposed Bell Bay Pulp Mill will meet the stringent guidelines for effluent emission limits, according to new scientific testing from Sydney-based expert marine toxicology consultants Ecotox Services Australia.

The report, *Toxicity Assessment of Pulp Mill Effluent for the Proposed Tasmanian Pulp Mill*, is based on the testing of effluent from an ECF Kraft Eucalypt pulp mill in Thailand - similar to that proposed by Gunns Limited - on a range of marine organisms specified under the ANZEC water quality guidelines at a range of concentrations.

Tests were conducted on the eggs, larvae and juveniles on a range of species, such as bacteria, algae, invertebrates and fish, at concentrations of 0.3%, 1% (the concentration of effluent at the edge of the mixing zone in Bass Strait) and 10% revealed no acute or short-term effect.

Gunns Limited Pulp Mill Project Manager Les Baker said the results highlighted that pulp mill effluent at a concentration more than 10 times of that at the edge of the mixing zone would not have any toxic impact on key species, such as scallops, striped trumpeter, sea urchins, amphipods, seaweed and others.

"The tests demonstrate conclusively that our pulp mill will easily meet the stringent requirements of the Resource Planning and Development Commission," Mr Baker said.

"The results are consistent with similar tests carried out by Ecotox on other pulp mills around Australia.

"Many of the tests used were developed by the National Pulp Mills Research Program and Ecotox's laboratory is certified by the National Association of Testing Authorities, ensuring the tests and results are scientifically defensible."

Mr Baker said there are already two pulp mills releasing effluent in to Bass Strait and have done so for more than 30 years.

"Many Tasmanians also forget that a pulp mill has been discharging effluent into the Derwent River near Hobart for more than 40 years," he said.

About 70 per cent less effluent is released from modern pulp mills, compared to those constructed about 15 years ago, due to significant advances in recycling technology.

Effluent from the proposed pulp mill will contain naturally occurring inorganic salts and organic wood constituents. All effluent will be treated on site in primary and secondary treatment facilities before being piped three kilometres off-shore from Five Mile Bluff and released at a depth of 20 metres. The Resource Planning and Development Commission has stipulated that no pulp mill effluent can be released in the Tamar River.

Mr Baker said the Ecotox report was commissioned by Gunns Limited as an extra initiative to prove that pulp mill effluent will not be an environmental concern.

“This is just another example of the additional lengths that Gunns Limited is prepared to go to to ensure the mill meets the RPDC guidelines,” Mr Baker said.

“Ecotox’s report also gives further weight to international studies showing there are no long-term impacts from pulp mill effluent and that industry and communities harmoniously coexist with modern mills.

“There are a number of lakes in Finland and Sweden that have three or four pulp mills on the banks discharging effluent. These waterways are home to vibrant healthy communities, fishing industries, schools, sailing clubs and a variety of other industries.”

Mr Baker said Gunns Limited had also engaged consultants that had spent hours underwater filming the area of Bass Strait where the effluent will be released to determine which marine organisms occupy the area.

“On the basis of the surveys and all scientific reports, Gunns Limited is confident that effluent from the proposed pulp mill will have no toxic impact on the marine environment.”

Gunns Limited will continue to work on its detailed Integrated Impact Statement, which will be handed to the RPDC after the guidelines are finalised and then made available to the public.

A full copy of the Ecotox report will be available in Gunns Limited’s Integrated Impact Statement.

For further information, please contact:

Sarah Dent, Brand Manager, Gunns Limited

Phone: (03) 6335-5201

Fax:

(03) 6334-7909

Mobile: 0417 711222

Email:

sarah.dent@gunns.com.au