



Report on meeting between Tasmanian Minister Brian Green MHA, REAST, and the WIA re the Aurora BPL trial in Hobart



On the morning of 11th October 2005, WIA Director Phil Wait (VK2DKN), Justin Giles-Clark (VK7TW), President Radio and Electronics Association of Southern Tasmania (REAST), and Phil Thomson (VK7SS), Managing Director of Novaris, met with Brian Green MHA, the Tasmanian Minister for Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, and two Government advisors and a representative from Aurora Energy.

It was made clear to the Minister at this meeting that BPL technology has the potential to cause significant interference to all HF spectrum users, not only radio amateurs, to the point where they can no longer operate in or near the BPL trial area.

The fast response emergency capability of radio amateurs was highlighted to the Minister along with a range of examples including the recent hurricanes in the US and the Asian tsunami.

We also highlighted the potentially life threatening situation caused by BPL interference to Personal Emergency Response Systems (PRS), some of which operate within the 27MHz HF spectrum. These devices may not operate successfully where a BPL signal is enabled and furthermore, as the LIPD regulation does not require location information to be kept, people who rely on these devices may not be aware of a potential life threatening problem.

The Aurora representative stated that they had notched the 27MHz frequencies used by PRS however we subsequently observed BPL interference from the Mt Nelson trial on PRS frequencies. The WIA is working closely with the Personal Emergency Response Services Association, (PERSA), on the BPL issue.

The importance of the EMC compliance framework (C-tick) was discussed. We expressed a concern that relaxing EMC standards in order to allow for BPL interference challenges the basic legitimacy of, and devalues, the long standing international EMC framework. A concern was expressed that a double standard will exist where electronic equipment manufacturers will be forced to meet stringent and expensive EMC framework requirements while BPL providers will be allowed to radiate much higher levels of interference from mains power cables. The current lack of progress in developing international standards for BPL (CISPR 22) was also discussed.

In order to emphasise what we believe to be questionable economic viability of BPL, we drew the Ministers attention to the recently abandoned PPL trial in the United States, and other discontinued trials.

During the meeting the Aurora representative stated that Aurora Energy had rolled out BPL in Hobart three months prior to ACMA's notification of the trial. Clearly Aurora has chosen not to follow ACMA's guidelines concerning notification of Access BPL trials.

Aurora argued that they had made progress in reducing the interference potential of BPL through experience and technological development, and had achieved

interference reduction to "one eighth' by introducing new `coupler technology'. We welcomed any such development and encourage them to work towards increasing their `one eighth' improvement to `one millionth'.

Both the Aurora representative and the Minister expressed a desire for co-operation in order to resolve the BPL interference concerns to Radio Amateurs. We stated our view that an acceptable level of interference cannot be achieved with the current technology and the physical construction of the power distribution network, none the less we are prepared to co-operate with the other parties as much as possible in order to achieve an acceptable outcome for our members.

Both sides of the BPL debate made their positions quite clear in the meeting and we believe the Minister and his advisors are now better informed on the issues of concern to radio amateurs.

Phil Wait VK2DKN
WIA Director

Justin Giles-Clark, VK7TW
REAST President