



Our Ref: 4-44261, 4-44258, 4-44172

MINISTER FOR HEALTH
ATTORNEY GENERAL: ELECTORAL AFFAIRS
FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mr T A and Mrs S M Cockerham
PO Box 134
YARLOOP WA 6218

Dear Mr and Mrs Cockerham

Thank you for your letters dated 6, 10 and 30 August 2007 in response to my earlier letters to you concerning issues arising from the Wagerup Refinery. The Minister has asked me to respond to you on his behalf as he is on annual leave.

Both the Department of Health (DOH) and the Government readily accept there has been health issues associated with the Refinery and this has never been questioned. For this reason, the Government implemented a number of initiatives designed to address known health impacts. Some of these included convening the Medical Practitioners' Forum, installing a community health nurse at Yarloop and insisting on the health survey now underway in the area. It is disappointing that no medical testing of the population is available that would confirm or reject a link. This information has been provided to me a number of times by highly specialised medical practitioners.

Similarly, there are no scientific tests capable of establishing whether Refinery emissions are impacting on the surrounding environment, such as soil or water. Of course, tests on vegetation are possible. However, detailed sampling has been unable to establish any readily apparent exposure to emissions. Air monitoring by both Alcoa and the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is progressing under the supervision of the CSIRO and I am confident that a high level of monitoring is in place.

With respect to air monitoring, the DOH liaises routinely with the DEC's Air Quality Management Branch on the results of air monitoring. At the Open Day held in Yarloop on 9 June 2007, the DOH had an officer present to discuss the findings of the Light Detector and Ranging (LIDAR) results with the general community. The DOH is supportive of the continuation of the LIDAR program, noting its potential to provide high level information on the potential impacts of the Refinery plume on its neighbours.

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With regard to the power station, the Health Impact Assessment prepared by an independent toxicological expert did not provide any evidence suggesting that either the existing power station, or an additional facility should this prove necessary, would adversely impact on the health of nearby residents. This information was contained in Alcoa's submission to the Environmental Protection Authority and I have no reason at this stage to doubt its validity or accuracy.

I regret the anomalies in the Minister for Health's letter to you dated 30 July 2007 regarding the Supplementary Property Purchase Program (SPPP) and rail noise. I note that you have also been corresponding with my colleagues, the Ministers for Planning and Infrastructure and Industry and Resources. I believe it is important that each individual Minister respond to you on issues related to their own individual portfolios. This will ensure only the most recent and accurate information is made available to you. For this reason, I do not intend to further address the issues relating to noise or the SPPP, as you are obviously well acquainted with the current situation.

I note that you have corresponded with the Minister for Health on a number of issues in the past several months. You may wish to meet with senior officers of the DOH to discuss any remaining issues. If you wish to accept this offer, please contact Mr Lindsay Gillam, Principal Policy Adviser, Environmental Health, at the DOH, on 9388 4961. It will be possible to meet with Mr Gillam in Yarloop should this be more convenient for you.

Thank you again for taking the trouble to advise me of your concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JH', written over a faint blue circular stamp.

**JOHN HYDE MLA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO
MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

11 OCT 2007