

YOUR SAY

ISSUES

No evidence against Alcoa

I WAS dismayed to read your report Cancer street (19/12). Having first created fear in the community and among our workforce in an earlier report (29/11) by misinterpreting an internal memo, you offer no evidence of why our refinery should be associated with the illnesses being suffered by the four unfortunate people who have different forms of cancer, other than that the people concerned "wonder whether there is a link".

No information is provided about their lifestyles, work history or other environmental exposures, nor is any credible medical opinion presented about what may cause these types of cancers.

Instead, you present raw data from the National Pollutant Inventory, which is of no value when discussing health issues. Exposure levels are the only meaningful measures.

We continue to emphasise the following points. At all of our operations, Alcoa's stack emissions are well within all statutory requirements. More than 3000 members of our workforce across WA have participated in a benchmark occupational health study known as Healthwise. This study is conducted by the University of WA and Monash University and is overseen by an advisory panel that includes representatives of the ACTU and independent experts. The early finding shows that the overall cancer rates in Alcoa employees participating in the studies are in line with rates found in the general population.

Our operations have been subject to a range of public inquiries, in addition to the usual statutory scrutiny, and no cause for concern about cancer risks has been revealed.

GEOFF HAYWARD, executive director, WA operations, Alcoa World Alumina Australia.