



CAPS Newsletter

Summer-Autumn 2009

Issue 10

Community Alliance for Positive Solutions Inc.

Representing 410+ supporters, including 210+ paid members, and growing...



Serving

Yarloop

Waroona

Hamel

Harvey

Cookernup

Wagerup

Other
Impacted
Areas

Inside:

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Air quality tests reveal significant impacts

The DEC has worked with the local community for several years to document and capture Alcoa pollution events using log books and air sampling canisters. Collecting data has led to a better understanding of how plumes behave and how meteorology affects the impacts, as well as helping to assess current air quality models. SODAR equipment was used to measure wind speed at 25m intervals up to a height of 200m. LIDAR equipment tracked plumes up to seven kilometres from the refinery, at which point they passed out of the sensing range of the equipment.

The DEC developed a software tool that presents a dynamic visualisation incorporating the LIDAR and SODAR data, community log sheet data, canister sample analysis data and all the meteorological data, on a time basis. The DEC believes that a high percentage of the observations made by most members of the community are reasonably attributable to the refinery.

Under complex conditions, often at the time of a complaint, the wind at the refinery is not blowing towards the location of the complaint. DEC staff smelled strong odours and traced these to the south end of the refinery, rather than from known odorous sources in the north of the refinery. For current operations there are significant odour impacts under complex meteorological conditions.

There is evidence of significant calciner-type odour that has not been quantified to date. There may be some underestimates in the emissions inventory, or there could be other sources that have not been included. The DEC will require Alcoa to review its emissions inventory, to make sure it includes all low level emissions from the refinery. Alcoa will also be asked to upgrade its meteorological and do an evaluation of mitigation options. The Ministerial approval for the Wagerup Three expansion required Alcoa to do twelve months additional monitoring to validate the model and predictions that were submitted with the ERMP. The model does a good job simulating some conditions, but cannot simulate the complex conditions. Information from the study will be used to re-work the model to affirm the predictions or otherwise.

Shine Lawyers Update - The US and Australian legal teams report that they are moving ahead in a positive direction in preparing the case. More information will be available soon. If you have been requested to submit information, please do so immediately.

*“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth.”
--Muhammad Ali, former World Champion boxer*



Yarloop Study (Sustainable Future Project) Update

This is a brief update on the progress made thus far with the 'Sustainable Future' project conducted by Dr Martin Brueckner (Edith Cowan University /Curtin University of Technology). Martin has recently completed a working paper, based on selected findings of the study, which will be presented in April 2009 to staff at the Curtin Business School. The working paper, which is intended for publication in an academic journal later this year, is available in digital form upon request. To receive a copy via e-mail, please contact Martin at m.brueckner@curtin.edu.au. Further academic publications are expected to emanate from the research in due course.

Dr Dyann Ross and Martin were also successful in securing a publishing contract with Fremantle Arts Centre Press for the publication of the findings of the study, allowing the broad spectrum of views collected from participants in the study to be presented together. The publication of the book is anticipated for mid 2010.

Research participants will be updated throughout the year on further developments.

Martin Brueckner (PhD)
Lecturer - Sustainability Management
CBS - School of Management,
Curtin University of Technology
and Edith Cowan University

ECHO (Environmental Chemical Hypersensitivity Organisation) was established to support persons affected by Chemical Hypersensitivity and their families.

ECHO's goals are:

- *To lessen the social impacts of MCS through networking, advocacy and understanding.*
These individuals cannot go into the community due to adverse reactions to perfumes, petrol, cigarette smoke, exhaust fumes and cleaning products, to name a few. These individuals often experience community exclusion and become isolated. Going to hospital can be life threatening due to the high risk of exposure to chemicals and fragrances.
- *To raise community and government awareness of how exposure to chemicals, even at low levels, can cause severe reactions and chronic illness in sensitive individuals.*
- *To promote consideration of the needs of these individuals in the community and at all levels of government.*
- *To reduce the impact on affected individuals by informing of strategies for minimising exposure to chemicals that aggravate this condition.*

Application forms for ECHO and more information are available by emailing: echowa@amnet.net.au.

ECHO wishes to thank Dr Geoff Pain for attending the NICNAS/OCS federal MCS consultation in Canberra as ECHO's representative. Also a thank you to Colin Walker for his submission to the Federal MCS Review.

IMPORTANT: Remember to fill in your Yarloop Bucket Brigade log sheets when you are impacted by pollution. Return the log sheets to PO Box 69, Yarloop 6218 or phone 9733 5011.



News Briefs

- **Ombudsman report:** The WA Ombudsman has supported a number of complaints by CAPS against the Department of Environment and Conservation. The government watchdog has sustained that the manner in which the Department's predecessor investigated and responded to complaints about Alcoa was inadequate, recommending that the Department consider incorporating time frames for Alcoa to respond to complaints, and that the Department improve their record keeping practices. The DEC must report back to the Ombudsman about their progress in six months.

The Ombudsman partially sustained the claim that the Department failed to advertise the proposed 2005 license renewal, recommending that a process be developed that incorporates analysis of complaints received when reassessing licenses. *To read the full report, go to www.caps6218.org.au.*

- **Community Health Survey results:** The study found that for symptoms potentially related to chemical exposure, elevated rates were found for most symptoms for residents of Hamel/Wagerup/Yarloop and Cookernup. Elevated rates of cancer were found in Cookernup. Some of these effects were statistically significant, though some were not. However, weaknesses in the methodology have been pointed out in a review of the study by Prof D'Arcy Holman of UWA. The Health Survey was a start, but was far from comprehensive, and did little to assess the full scope of health impacts suffered by the community. Missing most notably from those surveyed are the residents who have relocated because of health problems, and therefore, were not included in this study. *To read the full report go to www.caps6218.org.au.*

NOTES FROM CAPS MEETING WITH DEC January 2009

The DEC has acknowledged that CAPS is the largest organisation representing the community, and the DEC desires CAPS to become part of the Tripartite. CAPS has made it clear that they have no intention of being part of the Tripartite in its current form, and major changes will be needed before membership would be considered.

CAPS has put forward twelve conditions to the Minister for Environment that would need to be met before CAPS would consider becoming members of the group. A reply from the Minister will be forthcoming.

During this meeting a phone call came in concerning a dust event from the mudlakes that was occurring at that moment. Anthony Stewart of the DEC, who was attending the meeting, was able to go and photograph the event.

Alcoa continues to claim that everything is normal as per the CSIRO study done by Ian Galbally in August -September 2006, even though the study was done in the driest winter, liquor burner was turned off and the time period was only six weeks. The study is inconclusive as there were other factors not taken in to consideration (ie no study into heavy metals, PAHs, PM2.5, dust from the mudlakes). Alcoa only requested a small-scale specific study.

AIR CARE AUSTRALIA –

addressing air quality issues across the country

CMCOAG (Canning Melville Community Odour Action Group), Western Australia –

The DEC's "Odour Survey" has confirmed that the noxious odour affecting the communities around Canning Vale, Melville, Leeming and Willetton is coming from the RRRC Waste Composting Facility. The Health Department has yet to release their report on this issue. Some local politicians have now become more supportive of the communities' claims.

For more updates go to: <http://www.cmcoag.com/>

DUST EVENT CASE REMANDED

The DEC's case against Alcoa for a May 14 2006 dust event, originally scheduled for January, has been remanded until April 23. The DEC has filed for criminal negligence charges after Alcoa failed to contain dust from its red mud lakes even though it had agreed to do so after being found guilty of similar charges in 2004.

Neither Alcoa nor the DEC appeared for the hearing. The Magistrate received a note from Alcoa stating that they (Alcoa) needed more time and would like the court case to be heard in Perth and the Magistrate supported the request.

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Visit our website often-

www.caps6218.org.au

it's updated frequently!

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A HEARTFELT SALUTE TO A VALUED FRIEND –

The Executive Committee, members and supporters of CAPS wish to send their sincere gratitude to Paul Llewellyn as he leaves his parliamentary office at the end of May for other pursuits. Paul has supported CAPS through donations, asking questions in Parliament, and the photocopying of our newsletters, as well as advisement and encouragement.

Paul brings new depth to the term “gentleman”. He is truly a gentle man, but one with strong convictions, driven by truth and the integrity to do the right thing. If there were more Paul Llewellyns in this world, it would indeed be a much better place. However, our community is stronger and our future more hopeful because this one Paul Llewellyn chose to be a part of our lives. Thank you, Paul. Godspeed!

Protecting your privacy It is our duty of care to protect the privacy of our members. There are still a few people who are not sympathetic to our cause or compassionate towards those suffering health effects, and these people have, at times, been confrontational. To protect the privacy of our members, we will only publish names with expressed consent. You may meet other members, supporters and the executive committee in person at CAPS Membership Meetings. Questions concerning this policy can be addressed by co-chairs Vince Puccio 9733 5011 or Merv McDonald 0409370235.

A healthy environment for living and working is your basic human right.

Are you relocating? Please keep us informed by phoning or emailing us with your new contact details!

