

# CAPS Newsletter

Winter 2006

Issue 4



## **Community Alliance for Positive Solutions Inc.**

*Representing 340+ supporters, including 100+ paid members, and growing...*

### ***CAPS Members challenge new Environment Minister***

The CAPS Executive Committee were granted a special meeting with Minister Mark McGowan on 9 April, immediately prior to his meeting with CAPS members at the Town Hall. The Minister was questioned over the safety of permitted levels of emissions, and presented with research concerning the health effects of PM 2.5 (fine particulate matter). Members also discussed leakage into the groundwater from the RDA and refinery, as well as concerns over greenhouse emissions and the continuing dust events off the mud lakes. CAPS provided the Minister with a news article from the Harvey Mail describing the falling land values around Yarloop, and expressed concern over increased noise and rail traffic. Finally, the Minister was presented with the plans for creating a new town for displaced residents of Yarloop and surrounding areas. The Minister used the meeting as a fact-gathering mission and was non-committal when questioned about his position on the expansion.

Following the special meeting, the Minister met with approximately 50 CAPS members and supporters at the Town Hall. Members described their health impacts and experiences with Alcoa. When challenged about the land management problems and lack of fairness in the process, the Minister admitted that mistakes had been made in the past. However, he would not comment on the expansion. When the audience was questioned about how many people had their health affected by Alcoa, around 40 people raised their hands. The Minister then asked how many residents would stay in Yarloop if there was no problem, and how many feel they need to leave. The response was unanimous on both counts.

One CAPS member who is also a CCN member was denied entrance to the earlier meeting between the CCN and the Minister. The Minister informed the CAPS member that he had witnessed and noted the event.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April the CAPS Executive Committee also met with Appeals Convenor, Darren Walsh. Mr Walsh was presented with further research and evidence in support of the CAPS appeal, including modelling issues, particulate matter, community monitoring, health studies, the RDA, greenhouse gases, water use and quality, and the Co-generation plans. Issues concerning the CCN and Tripartite were also presented. Mr Walsh submitted his conclusions to the Minister on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, at which time Mr Walsh left his position at the EPA to begin a job in the private sector. A decision on the expansion by the Minister is expected in the near future.

#### **Inside:**

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#### **Bucket Brigade Initial Dust Wipe Results**

Unusually high aluminium readings were found in the initial testing carried out by the Yarloop Bucket Brigade. Dust wipe samples were taken on a Yarloop property near the mud lakes. The testing was carefully done in accordance with laboratory protocol and documented on video. Aluminium levels found in the samples were 361 micrograms per cubic metre, almost 70 times higher than the US EPA Region 6 screening levels, at a level considered to be cause for concern. Frequent exposure to high levels of aluminium dust can cause health effects in the Central Nervous System as well as damage to the respiratory system. Additional testing for toxic heavy metals and caustic is underway in a nearby location. The Yarloop Bucket Brigade now has 7 buckets in the area for air sampling, a NOx detector, and several kits to test for Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (carcinogens such as benzene). Reports will be released to the public after tests have been analysed and results interpreted by scientific consultants.

*"I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do something I can do."*

*--Helen Keller*



## *The Answer is Blowing in the Wind...*

“Dusty” is more than the name of a popular new musical. “Dusty” were the days of 19 March, 21 April, and 14 May 2006. With the unseasonably dry weather, variable winds whipped up clouds of dust off Alcoa’s RDA on those days, dumping particular matter on Yarloop properties, and local photographers were present to capture the events. The situation at the mud lakes is out of control, and CAPS members now have the photographic evidence to prove it.

Not only does RDA dust contain heavy metals and caustic, but because the particulate matter carried in the wind varies in size, from easily visible to ultra-fine, these elements are being inhaled unknowingly by local residents, including children and livestock, and clinging to damp surfaces, such as laundry and plants. Ultra-fine particulate matter, PM 2.5 and below, is especially dangerous for children, causing damage to developing lungs, and is known to contribute to cardiac events in adults.

Reports of the events to Adam West of the Dept of Environment were followed up by a visit, where Mr West took GPS coordinates of the photographed areas, and observed and documented the shifting winds in the area. From the vicinity of the mud lakes, Mr West held an instrument that measured the wind coming from one direction, while the plume from Alcoa’s tall stacks was seen blowing in another. Finally, credibility has been given to residents whose complaints had been brushed off by Alcoa with claims that the wind directions, according to their monitor, should not have affected the complainants.

We cannot afford to “brush off” the seriousness of these dust events. CAPS will continue doing dust wipe sampling in the area, and is requesting the Dept of Environment set up an ELPI machine here to capture and measure ultra-fine particulate matter (as demonstrated in the recent ABC Catalyst program, “Dirty Little Secrets”).

***Residents are encouraged to report odours, health effects, and dust events to Adam West at the Department of Environment by ringing 9550 4231.***

### *What’s happening???*

- CAPS are looking into the possibility of a social research study in Yarloop.
- Possible legal avenues are being explored to hold Alcoa accountable for damage done to local health and environment.

These items will be discussed further at the CAPS AGM.

### ***Annual General Meeting Notice***

Members are encouraged to attend the first CAPS Annual General Meeting to be held **Wednesday 19 July at 7pm** in the Town Hall. See the enclosed flyer for details, and use the proxy form if you cannot attend the meeting but wish to vote. The meeting will include a viewing of the Bucket Brigade video, highlighting the work of Bucket Brigades around the globe.

### ***State Ombudsman investigates DoE after CAPS presents strong case***

The State Ombudsman has determined that the case presented by CAPS against the Dept of Environment was strong enough to warrant an investigation. In the submission, CAPS’ claims include:

- the manner in which the DoE investigated complaints about Alcoa has been inadequate
- the DoE has allowed Alcoa to self-monitor
- a proposed renewal of Alcoa’s license was not advertised properly
- the Tripartite is a highly unsatisfactory method of community consultation.

The Ombudsman’s office is also continuing its investigation into the coverup of the Croft report by the Dept of Local Government and Regional Development.



### Summary of Membership Meeting Minutes 15 March 2006

- Fundraising committee reported that they would host a bay at the Yarloop 'In The Loop' event 16 April. One hundred and fifty dollar notes would be awarded in a raffle. Local residents are donating arts and crafts objects to sell, as well as baked goods. A jar of lollies would be given away in a guessing game.
- Announced visit by Appeals Convenor to Waroona 5-6 April and Yarloop 11-12 April to discuss appeals against EPA decision to support Alcoa expansion. CAPS have requested to see Alcoa's appeal, but the request was denied.
- Treasurers' report available to members upon request.
- The concept of moving the town was clarified. CAPS propose that a new town be created as an option for displaced, impacted residents, so that they can maintain the social fabric of the community they had known. Alcoa has only an informal buffer zone of 1.2 km at the moment. CAPS are looking into legal requirements of buffer zones, and that the EPA briefing document states 5km. CAPS recommend a 10 km buffer that incorporates the emission footprints.
- CAPS' appeal against the proposed Alinta Co-generation Plant plans was discussed. CAPS have information about particulate matter from a scientist at Monash University.
- A demonstration of the Bucket by the Bucket Brigade and explanation of the process of analysis. Residents are encouraged to keep a log of events and drop them at the General Store. Paul Llewellyn, Greens MLC, has sponsored a bucket and asked others to help. A dust sample would be taken soon at a residence near the mud lakes.
- Results of hair testing were discussed. Dr Igor Tabrizian was suggested for further testing and treatment for those with high heavy metals readings.
- The State Ombudsman is investigating two complaints made by CAPS against government departments.
- We have been in touch with US lawyers willing to help in our fight.
- A possible breach of ethics by the Tripartite was considered because many Tripartite members are Alcoa employees.

#### Challenging acceptable limits - Rachel Siewart

CAPS members met with Greens Senator Rachel Siewart regarding Australia's acceptable limits for toxic emissions. Senator Siewart has given CAPS a wealth of information about current standards, organisations to contact, and grant information. We will be pursuing the matter with the Senator to pursue changes on a Federal level.

#### WHAT'S THAT SMELL????

If you experience odours, health effects, and/or observe clouds of pollution near the ground that could possibly be coming from Alcoa, please follow these steps:

1. Contact the Yarloop Bucket Brigade immediately at 9733 5011, 9733 5506, or 0400738273 to take a sample, if the odour is strong and lingering.
2. If visible, photograph the event.
3. Contact Adam West at the Dept of Environment at 9550 4231 as soon as possible with details of time, smell, wind direction, and health effects.
4. Fill out a Yarloop Bucket Brigade log sheet, available from the General Store or by emailing [caps6218@yahoo.com](mailto:caps6218@yahoo.com). Deposit the log sheet at the Yarloop General Store or give to the attending Bucket Brigade member.
5. You may also choose to complain to Alcoa.

#### *CAPS appeal against Alinta EIS*

CAPS have submitted an appeal to both Waroona Shire and the Appeals Convenor against the proposed Wagerup Cogeneration Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Alinta plans to construct the cogeneration plant to include two 175 MW units. The following points were presented in the appeal:

- Much of the assumptions and modelling used in the EIS were derived from Alcoa's ERMP, which was a flawed document.
- The project location was inaccurate.
- The project would put further strain on our water supply.
- The EIS did not discuss PM 2.5 as a concern, though particulate matter of that size and smaller will be emitted.
- No buffer zone was indicated in the document, though an EPA document indicated any electricity plant generating 20 MW or more should have a 3000-5000 metre buffer.
- The plan uses modelling to determine human health impacts.
- The plant would contribute considerable greenhouse emissions.



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### ***Fundraising Feats!***

CAPS and the Yarloop Bucket Brigade wish to thank all the members and supporters who have been actively organising fundraising events in the past several months. Our three stalls at the "In the Loop" event in April raised over \$700. The stalls featured delicious homemade baked goods, plants, handmade decorative items, and a second-hand jumble sale. Lots of hard yakka went into the preparation for the event, and an impressive turnout of members and supporters manned the stalls all day long.

We also want to thank our members who held a firewood raffle in Harvey in May, which raised \$156.

The money raised by our recent fundraising events will be used to help pay for shipping and lab analyses of dust wipe, PAH and bucket samples performed by the Yarloop Bucket Brigade, as well as consultation with scientists concerning lab results.

The next major fundraising event for CAPS is scheduled on Sunday 29 October 2006 at the British Auto Classic in Waroona.

***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 the Annual General Meeting on 19 July. 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.***

***Attention Members – mark 19 July on your calendar for the CAPS Annual General Meeting. Details on page 2 of this newsletter and in the enclosed flyer.***