



Premier of Western Australia

Our Ref: 24-547121/JH

Messrs Vince Puccio and Merv McDonald
Co-chairs
Community Alliance for Positive Solutions
PO Box 69
YARLOOP WA 6218

Dear Mr Puccio and Mr McDonald

Thank you for forwarding me a copy of your letter of 11 June 2015 to Professor Tarun Weeramanthri of the Department of Health (DoH) regarding a possible buffer zone around the Alcoa Wagerup Refinery and querying whether the results of a public health survey undertaken in Yarloop are available to the public.

Protecting public health and the environment are fundamental considerations in Government decision making processes in relation to industrial developments, such as refineries.

As you have been informed in correspondence from the Department of Planning, that Department manages the regulations that would need to be applied to establish a buffer zone around the Refinery. However, it does not have specific expertise to determine whether applying a buffer zone is appropriate and acts on advice provided by DoH and the Department of Environmental Regulation.

I am advised that an assessment undertaken by senior DOH toxicologists in relation to the Refinery determined that there is not sufficient evidence to support the creation of a buffer zone. However, they acknowledge that areas close to the Refinery can intermittently be subject to odours and air emission plumes. Some individuals in these nearby areas, such as persons with respiratory issues, may experience adverse short term health effects at times. These can be appropriately managed with the advice of a general practitioner.

I understand your group will be familiar with the health survey conducted in 2007-08 and its results. Conducting the survey was a condition of approval for expansion of the Refinery by the (then) Government in 2007. The results of the survey were publicly released in a variety of forums. A copy of the survey results can be obtained by contacting the office of Professor Weeramanthri on 9222 2209.

Finally, in your letter you have made reference to the proposed siting of an alumina refinery in the Shire of Toodyay, east of Perth. I understand this proposal is at a conceptual stage and advise that no decisions on either its location or conditions of approval have been made. I can assure you that protecting public health and the environment would be key considerations for Government.

I understand your argument that if a buffer zone is established around a refinery to be located in the Shire of Toodyay then one might also be introduced surrounding the Wagerup Refinery. My understanding of the proposal for the refinery in the Shire of Toodyay is that it is quite different to the Wagerup Refinery. It will not necessarily be the case that if a decision is taken to create a buffer zone around an alumina refinery in the Shire of Toodyay then this will be accompanied by a retrospective decision for there to be a buffer zone around the Wagerup Refinery.

In view of this reply, I have informed Professor Weeramanthri's office that there is no need for an additional response on his behalf.

I thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Colin Barnett MLA
PREMIER

24 JUL 2015