

ALCOA WAGERUP REFINERY — BUFFER ZONE

5211. Hon Giz Watson to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Planning

Referring to the Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.1 — State Industrial Buffer Policy of 1997 and the Guidance for the Assessment of Environmental Factors Western Australia (in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1986) of June 2005, I ask —

- (1) With regard to the current power generating facility at the Alcoa Wagerup Refinery, what buffer zone is considered to be consistent with the above mentioned policies?
- (2) Currently, what is the closest distance between residential housing and the Wagerup power generating facility?
- (3) Is that distance compliant with these policies?
- (4) If yes to (3), how does the Minister explain the demand from nearby residents for a buffer zone?
- (5) If no to (3), what strategies does the Minister have to address this non-compliance?
- (6) When was the Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.1 — State Industrial Buffer Policy last reviewed?
- (7) What was the outcome of the review?
- (8) If such review has not been undertaken or completed, does the Minister consider the current *State Industrial Buffer Policy* as adequate?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

- (1) Mandatory buffer distances are not specified in State Planning Policy No. 4.1 — State Industrial Buffer Policy (SPP 4.1). The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Guidance for the Assessment of Environmental Factors Western Australia, recommends a generic buffer of 3000–5000 metres for a power generation plant, depending on its size and location. The guidance statement enables lesser buffer distances to be considered where supported by satisfactory site-specific technical studies. In 2006 a consultant for the proponent prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the then proposed power generation plant, which concluded that existing residences in the area were adequately separated from the power generation plant site. The EPA examined the EIS as part of the environmental review of the proposal, and concluded that the power plant is capable of being managed in an environmentally acceptable manner.
- (2) The nearest residence is located about 1500m south–east of the power generation site.
- (3) Yes. Neither SPP 4.1 nor the EPA guidelines stipulate mandatory buffer requirements for a power generation plant.
- (4) The desire for a buffer zone appears to be based on perceived adverse environmental impacts (noise, air pollution and dust emissions) and perceived adverse economic impacts upon surrounding communities.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) A review of State Planning Policy No. 4.1 — State Industrial Buffer Policy was commenced and a revised draft policy released for public comment in 2009.
- (7) The review has not been finalised. Submissions received on the draft (2009) policy identified issues with its implementation. The Department of Planning is working to address these issues, in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Environmental Protection Authority, the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority and the Department of Health.
- (8) The current gazetted policy (1997) and the draft policy (2009) are both considered relevant and are used in conjunction with each other when making planning decisions.