WATER RESOURCES, CHLORINATION, CHANGES TO OVARIAN FUNCTION

1422. Mr B.K. Masters to the Minister for Health

1) Is the Minister aware of new research published online on 25 March 2003, in Environmental Health Perspectives (Journal of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences) by Gayle C. Windham *et al* entitled 'Chlorination by-Products in Drinking Water and the Menstrual Cycle Function'?

2) Is the Minister aware that this research showed changes to ovarian function as a result of exposure to trihalomethanes (THM) produced as a result of the chlorination of domestic drinking water supplies?

3) What is the range and average of THM concentrations in chlorinated water supplies provided by the Water Corporation?

4) How do these concentrations compare with the 60 ug/L THM (TTHM) level reported in the above research paper as being responsible for changes to ovarian function?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

1. The research referred to exists

2. The authors of the report only claim 'these findings suggest that THM exceedence may effect ovarian function and should be confirmed in other studies'.

   Animal studies have found an association between high concentrations of THMs and cancer. Such a link has not been established for humans, but most health authorities around the world have taken a precautionary approach and adopted a maximum recommended concentration for THMs. In Australia, the 1996 Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG), prepared by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend that average THM concentrations should not exceed 250 mg/L although occasional results up to 1000 mg/L are acceptable.

3.-4. I understand my colleague the Minister for Government Enterprises is supplying answers to these questions.