

COCKBURN CEMENT WORKS — DUST POLLUTION

198. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Environment:

As the minister knows, a lot of concern has been expressed by the community located close to the Cockburn Cement facility in Beeliar. Can the minister update the house on improvements that this government has made to Cockburn Cement's licence and explain how we came to be in this current predicament?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for the question. I would like to outline to the house —

Mr F.M. Logan: Can I answer too?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The member for Cockburn will be very interested in my answer.

I would like to outline what this government has done about this extremely important issue to the people of Western Australia, and what the Labor Party did not do when it was in government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you members!

Mr W.R. MARMION: The Cockburn Cement facility has been of concern to the community for some time. The odour and the emissions from the cement plant have been of major concern to the residents of Western Australia and the people around Cockburn. It is probably the most important issue in my office, judging by the number of letters about the issue that come in. Most of the letters come from the member for Cockburn, who has been forwarding letters from some of the residents in his electorate. It is an extremely important issue.

What has this government done? We introduced a two-stage process of consultation with the community so we could address these concerns. On 1 April 2010 the former Minister for the Environment issued a draft amended licence for public comment. Fifty-six submissions were received on this draft licence, and further amendments were made. A second amended licence was advertised on 30 August 2000. A second round of public comment consultation was called for and 10 more submissions were received. Therefore, there were two rounds of public consultation on the draft licence with the community. On 20 December last year the final amended licence was released. That was done with a vast amount of community consultation. I will not go through all the attributes of the licence, but there were two very important improvements to it. The amended conditions required, for the very first time, that Cockburn Cement install a bag filter on kiln 6 by March 2012 at a cost of \$23 million. This will ensure that dust is not expelled from the kiln into the environment, particularly on trip-outs. Also for the first time, the new licence includes a requirement for Cockburn Cement to stop the feed of raw material into the relevant kiln when dust limits are exceeded—another method of shutting down pollution into the local community.

How did we come to this predicament? Some serious questions need to be asked about why the former government allowed development to occur so close to the plant without toughening up building conditions around the plant. Either the conditions are toughened up or the development does not occur; it is pretty obvious.

Mr P.B. Watson: You are in government; fix it!

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will tell the member for Albany what the last government did.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you members!

Mr M. McGowan: The previous or the last?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The previous government. When that government was in power between 2001 and 2007, eight new licences were issued to Cockburn Cement while the member for Cockburn was in government. Did these eight amended licences include the bag filter house? No. Did they include strict emission controls? No. Did they stop the raw-feed material going into the kilns when limits were exceeded? No. What did that government do? Good question. It allowed continued development approvals around the plant. They were on the east side of the plant. The prevailing winds come from the west. Therefore, that government allowed the development to proceed without addressing the land issue and now there are problems with dust. I have seen the photos of houses and cars with dust on them and it is of great concern. This government makes decisions; we listen to the community. I will close —

Several members interjected.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Okay, I will keep going! Once I receive the Appeal Convener's report I will visit residents. I will go onsite to the Cockburn Cement plant, I will address the recent health reports and I will not hesitate to toughen up the licensing conditions, including the possibility of a bag filter house on kiln 5, if I deem that to be required.