[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Motion

Resumed from 27 June on the following motion moved by Hon Jim Scott -

That this House notes the significant problems arising in the area of waste management including the impacts on health, remediation of sites contaminated by inappropriate disposal of waste and the siting of waste facilities.

HON J.A. SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [11.03 am]: I said yesterday that the State must have an overview of its waste management needs to ensure that well-meaning councils do not take a scattergun approach to this matter. I must say that many councils have done a fantastic job in researching the individual needs of their communities. However, they cannot appreciate the wider community needs outside their own boundaries. The State Government must take -

Point of Order

Hon PETER FOSS: I am finding it difficult to hear the member as there is a considerable amount of other discussion in the Chamber. I am rather keen to hear what he is saying and it is difficult to do so.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Peter Foss is eager to hear the speech of Hon Jim Scott and members should take account of his desire in their conversations.

Debate Resumed

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Thank you, Mr President. I am pleased that Hon Peter Foss wants to listen to one of my speeches.

As I said, the State needs to have a strategic overview and control of not only the number and siting of these waste management facilities, but also how they can work together to produce the outcomes for the waste stream that the State wants. It is all very well that Global Olivine can produce a range of products if its facility goes ahead, which facility sounds fantastic, but it will not be economically viable if it cannot get sufficient feedstock, which will necessitate its getting waste from all over the State. It has already done considerable work to locate premises and to come to agreement with various country shires. It has spoken of taking grain waste from Merredin, mining waste from Kalgoorlie and further waste from Geraldton and Albany. This project will provide a huge logistical problem with a heck of a lot of waste travelling over massive distances. I question whether this is a realistic proposition.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Will there be a negative by-product of this proposed procedure?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: A negative by-product would be the greenhouse gas emissions produced by trucks driving around the country picking up this stuff. Another negative by-product would relate to other proposals being put in place. There may be a better long-term effect, possibly not in immediate monetary terms for that facility, but for the State as a whole, in getting the levels of mulch needed, for instance, as I said yesterday.

Hon Peter Foss: You can't stick it on the back of a freight train and move it around that way?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: No. At one stage Olivine talked to Westrail about having the stuff trucked and it believed it could do that by rail. I doubt it could work as I do not believe the margins would be high enough. However, I believe that with these huge facilities and other facilities trying to provide different services and products as an outcome, perhaps the cheapest one would pull away from outcomes that would be more desirable than monetary outcomes.

The State must have a strategic overview. In that regard we are moving too slowly because agreements are currently being made. The south west group of councils' Bedminster plant is already a fait accompli, and I believe the Gosnells one is now in that position. By the time we get a strategic overview, there will be no point in having one as all those facilities will be in place. We must move much more quickly than we are now, otherwise no doubt there will be a mess. There will be much grief for people who invest in these facilities in the belief they will get a sufficient, and the right type of, waste stream.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That is a commercial decision for them to make.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It is also a commercial decision for the councillors. They could enter into a contract with a company only to find that the operation cannot continue to operate, and they end up with nothing. A good example is the Kwinana situation. I understand that the council has decided to enter into a contract with Global Olivine, but the area produces only 10 000 tonnes of waste. Global Olivine cannot build a facility if it can access only 10 000 tonnes of waste.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Are you saying we should produce more waste to justify the economics of the facility?

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I said that was one of the problems. We could have people promoting the production of more waste.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Even though the member might not believe it, the Greens are always trying to bring order to the world. However, we believe progress should be based on biological factors rather than financial factors. We live in a biological world, but it appears that Hon Ken Travers has not worked that out yet. We must have structures that allow our physical organisms to survive.

We must act quickly to ensure that we have a statewide perspective on how to deal with waste, not a council-by-council perspective. That is the way waste has been handled in the past, and we have seen negative outcomes as a result. I recently spoke briefly about the Atlas Company site at Mirrabooka. I attended a meeting at which the council confronted a dilemma because it felt its contract with that company locked it in, despite the company's not living up to the promises made about delivering power generation from the waste. Even though it was said that power was being produced, the plant did not generate enough energy to illuminate a light bulb. It was deception, because it was advertised as a successful environmental project. The Atlas Company was given an environmental award on the basis of its having produced energy from waste processed at the plant. When an investigation driven by the community established that that was not true, the plant was closed down for some time. The waste was not being handled in an appropriate manner. However, because the contract did not deal with how the waste was to be handled - only that it was handled - it could not be deemed void and the council could not take the work elsewhere. The council is still fighting with the community about using that facility. It has not worked in the past and it is not likely to work in the future.

I am very angry that the appropriate government agencies did not step in more decisively and sooner. The putrescible waste processed at the facility was to be turned into gas and used for generation, but it was being moved out in the middle of the night and dumped in an unlined landfill facility. It was leaching into underground water supplies because the area in question is on the Gnangara water mound and is part of the aquifer chain that runs through our northern suburbs. That situation was brought to the Department of Environmental Protection's attention, but it did nothing. Members of the community even took pictures of the material being dumped in the middle of the night - obviously that was done with good photographic equipment - and provided that evidence to the DEP. They also took DEP officers to the site and showed them the putrescible waste. The officers said that they would do something about it, but they later changed their minds. While they were at the site they agreed that the waste was putrescible, but when they got back to their office they decided that it was not and that they would not prosecute.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What did they do with it?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I hope they had to eat it. They should have acted on that advice. That was very soft policing of what was clearly an intended and serious breach of our environmental laws.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: What normally happens to putrescible waste?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: In the past, much of it was dumped, and that was the problem. It eventually became methane and seeped out, which added to our greenhouse gas problems. It also would have caused pollution in our water supplies. A former member of this place, Hon Sam Piantadosi, has told me that many problems were created by one tip that was contaminating water supplies in the northern suburbs.

Hon Ken Travers: A number of them have caused problems, particularly the one at Pinjarra.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: That is why we cannot continue these activities. The plants being installed by councils are an attempt to deal with the situation.

Countries that have larger populations than Perth's are now producing so much waste that they cannot put it in landfill facilities. A couple of years ago the City of New York tried to come to an arrangement with the Marshall Islands, whereby it paid \$8 a tonne to fill an atoll with rubbish. The process would have created more land for future development.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Very innovative.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: We cannot keep doing that sort of thing, even though it is the cheapest solution to the problem. People have now focused on the issue and have come up with many innovative approaches to turning waste into energy. It has always been used for compost in some areas, but many new ideas are emerging to deal with a raft of products and to create new products from waste. That is certainly the way to go.

We must have an overview. The State should foster a coordinated approach so that we can get the outcomes we want. We have to look at the other side of not doing that and the cost of clean-ups when people are not disposing of waste properly. I cannot find a better example than the Omex Petroleum site in Bellevue, where the

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

State has spent more than \$6 million of valuable taxpayers' money cleaning up the site, which was polluted by a company headed by the Quackenbush family, I believe. That family simply moved its funding into other companies. They escaped liability from that clean-up and, quite frankly, they should have been prosecuted heavily for what they did. That company dumped a whole raft of waste material, including oil, which it was cleaning and recycling, and it used sulphuric acid and a lot of different products to clean up, and we finished with a lot of heavy metals and so on dumped into a huge pit or well out the back. Some of our underground aquifers are fed from this area. A lot of the run-off from the hills flows into the Leederville aquifer.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order, members! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. It does not matter to me whether or not the members can hear. My job is to ensure that the professional officers who are required to record what is being said are able to hear. If members want to talk, they can go outside.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It only came to light that this was a critical area for the feeding of the Leederville aquifer because the property was sold. I understand, from my research, that it was sold to a plastering company that went out and found a huge mound at the back of the block and decided to flatten it out so it could use the area more successfully. When it did, it released a huge mass of oil, which created a lake over a vast area of Bellevue and flowed into other properties in the area that were sold by the Quackenbush family. The oil polluted all of those areas. One of the activists with whom I have been involved, Lee Bell, bought a property over the road from this facility and he first became aware of this problem when he dug a hole in his back garden.

Hon Peter Foss: Lee Bell is an absolute bullduster!

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss and Hon Derrick Tomlinson have said that Lee Bell is an absolute bullduster.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Derrick Tomlinson has resiled from that comment.

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I ask Hon Jim Scott to withdraw. I would not use such language in this place.

Hon Peter Foss: That was me.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: In the first instance, I cannot require the member to withdraw. I assume that the member is insisting that he has been misrepresented?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Your assumption is correct, sir.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: In due course the member will be able to make his comments about what has been said, but perhaps for the benefit of the House, and to save any further argument, it was in fact Hon Peter Foss who said what it was claimed Hon Derrick Tomlinson said. Therefore, if Hon Jim Scott wishes to direct his vitriol to Hon Peter Foss, the House would be prepared to accept that.

Debate Resumed

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. I was in the process of doing that as Hon Derrick Tomlinson stood up. The reality is that after Lee Bell arrived at this site with his young family, obviously not leaving them behind, he dug a post hole in the backyard and discovered he was getting burning sensations on his arm and had to go inside and wash it. On further investigation he found out more about the Omex site and this huge spill.

Hon Peter Foss: It had no impact on his place at all.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It certainly did.

Hon Peter Foss: There were three scientific studies. To his knowledge, the air was better than the scientific studies

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss has said nothing was found there, but there were in fact high lead levels, and Lee Bell has moved from that house because of the lead levels and the effect it could have on his kids.

Hon Peter Foss: Too much paint, that is what it is.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss has a lot to cover up here, because he was the Minister for Health who did nothing about this for a long time.

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

Hon Peter Foss: I was the first person who did something about it. Until I came along Labor had done nothing. The area had been covered over with dirt. I was the Minister for Health who came in and did something. There was nothing wrong with Lee Bell's place - that was his problem. He was a bullduster!

Hon J.A. SCOTT: This site has been around for a very long time.

Hon Peter Foss: Yes, it has. I was the first person to do something about it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Peter Foss will come to order. He will have an opportunity in due course to make his comments about these issues. I do not mind the occasional interjection if it adds something to the debate, but it is not a discussion at the moment between Hon Peter Foss and Hon Jim Scott.

Point of Order

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I seek clarification of whether the term "bullduster" is acceptable in this Chamber or whether it is unparliamentary in relation to any person?

Deputy President's RulingRuling

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: A lot of words are accepted in this Chamber that some members would consider unparliamentary. However, certain words are considered by the House, and have been ruled to be, absolutely unparliamentary. As is always the case, it depends on the context in which the word is used. It has not been the case in the past that the word "bullduster" has been considered unparliamentary. Derivatives of that word have certainly been held to be unparliamentary, but for the time being, and given the context in which it was said, it is not unparliamentary.

Debate Resumed

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It is not surprising that the former health minister is sensitive to this issue, because if it were not for people like Lee Bell and others complaining about that site and pushing for something to be done, nothing would have been done. The minister was goaded into action by people like Lee Bell.

Hon Peter Foss: Nonsense. You know nothing about it. Goebbels would be pleased with you.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss probably should have prosecuted those people -

Hon Peter Foss: Hon Bob Pearce should have prosecuted.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Yes, he should have as well.

Hon Peter Foss: He could not. He found the laws inadequate.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Both Hon Bob Pearce and Hon Peter Foss should have done something about this issue and should have acted far more firmly than they did. We had years of inaction on that site and at the end of the day the polluters completely escaped from having to pay. They are continuing their businesses under different names, and still on the corner of the Omex block. It is a disgrace that the taxpayer has once again footed the bill.

Even during the clean-up there were problems. I recall the questions I asked in this place about the emission levels coming from that site, and I recall being told that they had not reached the trigger levels for action to be taken. In fact, when I received the data from Lee Bell, who made sure it came from the consultant who carried out the monitoring, I became aware that the truth had not been told. The trigger levels had been constantly exceeded and nothing had been done by the Health Department to ensure the safety and health of the community in that area. A number of people had reported that they felt ill. The Health Department then phoned them and said that their state of health was completely unrelated to the condition of the Omex site because the trigger levels had not been exceeded.

Hon Peter Foss: You are proving that the Greens talk nonsense. They believe anything anyone tells them.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss is claiming that the reports that show that the action and trigger levels were constantly exceeded are nonsense. The Health Department claimed they had not exceeded the levels.

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order! Hon Peter Foss should come to order.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It amounts to grossly inaccurate reporting by the department, even though the subsequent data provided by, I think, Thiess Environmental Services, shows that the levels were exceeded. I am also concerned that the departments involved appeared to lack coordination when managing the clean-up. They reflected the lack of coordination, identified by the Standing Committee on Public Administration, in addressing the problems at Wagerup.

Another situation arose recently at the Waste Control Management Pty Ltd site at Bellevue, for which, again, regulation was pathetic. In the face of denials, a huge explosion occurred there. Long before that, I had asked

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

questions and raised concerns about the site. It was not until after it had blown up that the Health Department showed signs of taking action. Although the department indicated that it was about to take action regarding that site, the reality was that the volume of solvents on the property exceeded the permitted level, and there were materials on the site that should not have been there. In addition, they were not kept in a safe and proper way. I am puzzled how that site and many of the other waste disposal sites in the metropolitan area were given planning approval. I understand that the disposal of solvents had become a problem that needed addressing. However, it was a mistake to allow such an explosive, volatile facility to be built so close to a residential community. The Health Department has much to answer for in that regard.

In the last minute of the term of the previous Government it moved to water down schedule 2, I think -

Hon Peter Foss: I feel several hours of reply coming on.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Jim Scott has the floor.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The Swan City Council's approval to build a brickworks in the Swan Valley was challenged before the Full Bench of the Supreme Court, and the court found it to be a noxious industry. Consequently, the Health Department wanted to change the definition, but that change was not ratified by the House. Rather than a regulatory change, which would be open to scrutiny, it was slipped through and gazetted, I think, in the last days of Parliament. I have not checked, but I believe it was approved by proclamation.

Hon Peter Foss: That was sneaky.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It was sneaky, as it was an incredibly controversial issue.

Hon Peter Foss: It might be the method provided for in the Act.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The change was made to facilitate the establishment of noxious industries in areas in which they would have an impact on urban communities.

Hon Peter Foss: Even for a Greens' allegation, that is pretty slim.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I had a briefing on the proposal to change that definition.

Hon Peter Foss: You have forgotten the detail.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I have not forgotten the detail. I had a briefing in my office about the proposed change to the Health Act.

Hon Peter Foss: What does this have to do with waste management?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It has much to do with waste management. I am referring to noxious industries being located in close proximity to residential areas. That situation has sometimes arisen because development has occurred later; nonetheless, it should not have occurred so close to those industries. The Waste Control site was established after the area was well and truly settled. The change in definition has a great deal to do with waste disposal, because it has taken away the ability for communities to prevent the establishment of noxious industries, under which category, in accordance with the Act, waste control facilities generally fall.

At that briefing the Health Department officers said they would amend the definition through the regulatory process, but I said I would do everything I could to prevent its being passed by the House.

Hon Peter Foss: Is it not appropriate that it was left in the hands of the local council to decide?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It may be in some cases, but it appears that the previous Government left some things in the hands of local councils and not other things. That Government did everything it could to control local councils. For example, many planning controls were seized by the minister. It is all very well to leave planning to councils, but the Swan City Council has allowed many brickworks, which are noxious industries, to be located in areas that are not appropriate.

Hon Peter Foss: It was a democratic decision.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It was hardly democratic if the council approved something that should not have been approved. Legal advice was finally sent to the council advising that the proposed brickworks were a noxious industry, so the council had to knock back the application. It did not want to do that of course.

Hon Peter Foss: It responded to the people.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It wanted yet another brickworks in the area to further pollute people. When I asked questions in this House about the pollution that came from those facilities, I asked about the number of pollutants that were supposed to have limits on how much could be discharged. I found that nobody actually monitored those pollutants to see whether they were discharged at all. We have no idea to what extent people are being poisoned by those emissions, because no testing has been done.

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: That was according to the answers the member's Government gave me. If those answers were inaccurate, it is not my fault; it is his fault. The community did have an avenue through which to do something about these noxious industries. Now we have seen the move by the Health Department to try to close that avenue without any scrutiny. It is a disgrace.

We are seeing another problem now, and I have heard that departments are moving on it. We must look at ways to properly audit from where the solvents and so on that were held at the Waste Control Pty Ltd site are coming, their uses, how much is used on-site, and how much is finding its way to recycling or proper waste-handling facilities.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Thousands of different solvents are used for painting. So many solvents are used in industry that it is difficult to go into all of them. Suffice to say, a lot of solvents are being used. There is no real paper trail detailing what happens to these solvents. Quite a lot of solvents have been poured down drains and have polluted waterways, underground aquifers and rivers over a period. We are starting to learn that the chemical impurities in our water supplies are probably causing more far-reaching impacts on our community health than we originally thought. We need to deal with them very carefully. The problem is that it costs money to do that. I understand that the previous owner of the Waste Control site, whose name escapes me at the moment - not the owner of the site when the explosion occurred; not Mr Claflin - said in discussion with me that one of the major problems was getting industry to send the solvents to be properly handled or recycled and that, to get industry to do this, it had to be done very cheaply. That meant that not much money could be made by people who recycle and handle that waste. It is important for the future that a very good recycling facility be built. It may have to be funded by the Government, or facilitated by the Government, at least as generously as the previous Government facilitated the building of the convention centre in Perth. It seems as though the State will not achieve much out of that deal, but there is a lot in it for the developer. In this case -

Hon N.F. Moore: I beg your pardon?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I am saying that we should be prepared to help fund a proper recycling facility to properly deal with these solvents in the same way as the convention centre was funded, even if it is to the benefit of somebody other than the community. Vast amounts of money have been invested in projects that look pretty, are iconic and so on. However, it seems that the control of solvents and other waste which have high impacts on the community if they cause explosions, get into our water supplies or are breathed through the air is not sexy enough to warrant investment in those sorts of facilities. There has been a lack of proper handling facilities to deal with this problem. I know the Government has been looking at this issue for a long time, and it has been a long time coming. Money must be spent on a recycling and handling facility for these types of waste. However, a strong audit trail is also required by industries using these facilities, so we can see how much solvent is left over and goes into waste from a typical spray-painting facility or any other facility using these types of solvents. That should be looked at to see how much waste is being produced. Then, if people are not sending that waste to a proper recycling facility, they should be very closely looked at to ensure they are not dumping the waste. There must be some way to ensure that whoever runs such a facility can do so and can, at the very least, make a bit of money from it. Proper facilities must be provided and there must be proper upkeep of those facilities. There is no doubt that the Waste Control site was a total disaster and had been for a long time. It was a real cowboy outfit, largely because of a lack of funding.

Finally, I turn to the health impacts and how we measure the health impacts of uncontrolled waste on the community. Again, the Waste Control facility is a good example. According to answers I have received in this place, a number of people have clearly shown symptoms of being affected by the release of chemicals during the explosion and by living in the area affected by the operations of the facility. We know that an explosion does not necessarily need to occur for people to be affected; it can happen through waste leaching into water supplies and in all manner of other ways. Breathing the gas that comes from these facilities in a normal way can cause significant health problems, particularly for the people handling these wastes and also for the public in many cases. We must look carefully, first of all, at our government departments and ensure that we need some of the products we are using. For instance, I recall an anti-graffiti spray used by Homeswest that was not only toxic but also a trigger for asthma. This spray was also used on bus shelters. I have seen people spraying this material onto walls and bus shelters without using breathing apparatus and without ensuring that the public is at a safe distance. I know that at one Homeswest development one child was made seriously ill by air pollution, and whether that was from dust or the anti-graffiti spray I am not certain. However, it appears to be a strong contributor to that child's being rushed to hospital and kept there for some time. It became clear that government departments give no thought to the impact on people's health of the chemicals they spray. Government departments need to go through their specifications and replace the toxic chemicals they approve

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 28 June 2001] p1523c-1529a

Hon Jim Scott; Hon Peter Foss; President; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich

for use. That would reduce the volume of dangerous products that end up in our waste control facilities. I also think that private businesses should become involved in an education campaign, and should work in conjunction with the Health Department to assess the products they use. In many cases, more benign products can be used to replace toxic chemicals. That is certainly the case with the anti-graffiti chemicals that are sprayed on walls. Products that do not result in adverse health reactions are available.

The other problem is that it is difficult to pin down whether this type of waste causes an illness. Currently, people are becoming ill in workplaces and in their homes from emissions, but it is difficult to prove that those emissions - whether from solvents or anything else - are the cause of the illness from which they suffer. This State needs to conduct more epidemiology studies around sites to pin down the dangerous chemicals that are causing ill health among the community. A good example of that is the health problems in Yarloop. Considerable concern exists that that community's health problems are caused by the liquor plant - which does not produce liquor but aluminium. People in the Yarloop community send in complaints on a weekly basis about the health impacts from the Wagerup Alumina Refinery. It is difficult to pin down the precise chemical, or the combination of chemicals, that cause their health problems. Commonsense would indicate that, as it is the only facility of its kind in the area - apart from a timber mill - it is likely that the emissions from Alcoa World Alumina's Wagerup refinery would be the cause. However, a range of agricultural chemicals is also used in the area. In that instance, epidemiology studies could pin down the precise cause of people's health problems. Very few epidemiology studies are conducted on the impact on the community of air emissions, but we know it is a huge cost to Health Departments in all Australian States. Research in New South Wales shows that six times as many people are made ill and leave work from chemical inhalation as from physical injury. It is a massive cost to our community, and we must deal with it. Western Australia is doing nothing to pin down the real causes of these health problems. People in the Health Department have put it to me that the cost of epidemiology studies is too great. I have never believed that, because I have seen the clever studies that have been conducted in other countries, in which they use existing data to come up with a precise understanding of the impacts of different pollutants on communities, without a huge expenditure.

We pay a fortune for health services, and health costs are rising all the time. Recently more money was pumped into our Health Department to keep it operating efficiently. We constantly see more money being pumped into our hospital system to cope with the rising level of community health costs. I think that epidemiology studies are a cheap way to get rid of the causes of many health costs. We should treat the problem at the beginning rather than allow them to develop. We have seen only the tip of the iceberg of chemical illness in the community. Something like 10 000 new organic chemicals come on the market every year. Although each is given an individual test, and one assumes if used carefully and according to the rules that, generally, they should be okay, very little research is conducted on the impacts of those chemicals when combined with other chemical emissions. We find that regulations in the workplace for people who handle these types of chemical wastes do not take into account the effect of multiple chemical usage, only single chemical usage. The information I have been given by toxicologists is that sometimes the impact of the combination of two chemicals on one's health is 20 times greater than exposure to only one chemical. This area has not been properly researched. We need a lot more research and epidemiological studies into this. We need to have a good look at the regulations that govern the use of these products, because the best way to prevent the problem of dangerous chemical waste is to get those chemicals out of the waste stream in the first place by using other chemicals that are not as toxic.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.