

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, SARS VIRUS, ACTION PLAN

1430. Hon. C.L. Edwardes to the Premier

I refer the Premier to recent media reports that an increasing number of Australian companies are quarantining employees who have travelled to countries affected by the SARS virus and ask -

- (a) what action plan or contingency plan has the Public Sector, in order to meet their 'Duty of Care' under the *Occupation Safety and Health Act 1984*, put in place for any public servants who have travelled to areas that are affected by SARS for private or public reasons;
- (b) does this action plan or contingency plan involve public servants on 'home' isolation or are they in quarantine at work;
- (c) if they are in quarantine at work, does the work area have isolation air conditioning;
- (d) if the public servants are on 'home' isolation, what steps are being carried out to protect their families;
- (e) are public servants still being required to travel to areas affected by the SARS virus; and
- (f) what precautionary measures are being enforced for this travel?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (a) DOCEP received a guidance note on the SARS virus from the Health Department, which was sent to all Public Sector Agencies. DOCEP distributed this guidance note to all staff. The guidance note clearly explains to staff what they need to do in terms of monitoring their health if they have returned recently from a SARS affected area and what actions need to be taken if they feel they have any symptoms of SARS.

No WorkCover staff member, as part of their work requirements has travelled to any SARS areas. A recent informal survey on the travel arrangements of staff currently on leave indicated that no staff members are currently in any SARS area. The recent advice from the Department of Health has been distributed to staff and included a requirement that Management be kept informed of staff members' travel arrangements, so that any quarantine requirements can be implemented as necessary.
- (b) The guidance note recommends that staff who believe they may have symptoms of SARS stay at home and get in contact with their general practitioner.
- (c) Not applicable.
- (d) Not applicable.
- (e) No
- (f) Not applicable.