

AUSTRAL BRICKS - POLLUTION LIMITS

5522. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to Australbricks, which has three brickworks in the Swan Valley, and ask -

- (1) Is the Minister aware that Australbricks -
  - (a) currently operates without any pollution limits in their licence; and
  - (b) previously had emissions limits in their licences?
- (2) Can the Minister explain why Australbricks had their pollution limits removed from their licence by the then Department of Environment?
- (3) Who was responsible for this decision and why?
- (4) Does the Minister consider that this noxious industry does not require pollution limits?
- (5) If yes to (4), why?
- (6) How can the Minister ensure that public health has been protected from acid gases during the time that Australbricks has been operating without pollution limits?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1)
  - (a) The Ministerial Conditions for both the Malaga and Bellevue brickworks limit fluoride emissions at all times to a maximum of one gram per second for each premises. In addition the current licences for the Malaga and Bellevue brickworks limit hydrogen fluoride emissions if the exhaust gas scrubber is being bypassed. Both these brickworks are fitted with acid gas scrubbing systems.
  - (b) Prior to December 2003 the licences for these three brickworks included a limit for hydrogen fluoride at all times.
- (2) During an amendment of the licences for the three premises in December 2003 the then Department of Environment made changes to the emission limit conditions. However the emission limits imposed through the Ministerial Conditions remain, and do not need to be duplicated in the licences to apply. The Caversham brickworks is a much older and smaller plant and has lower total emissions.
- (3) See answer to (2).
- (4) No. Both the Malaga and Bellevue brickworks have emission limits set under their Ministerial Conditions and their Licences. Caversham, a much older and smaller plant, has lower total emissions. Monitoring has demonstrated that emission levels have been below health guidelines. The licences are currently under review and will be amended if appropriate.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) Ambient monitoring for hydrogen fluoride has been carried out for the Bellevue and Caversham brickworks between 2003 and now. This monitoring has indicated that levels are below public health guidelines. The Malaga brickworks was fitted with new improved technology gas scrubbers in January 2006, which has reduced emissions from this plant, particularly for hydrogen fluoride. The Australbricks' brickworks in the Swan Valley have been required to monitor emissions from their stacks for a range of possible contaminants. The Department of Environment and Conservation is conducting a study of ambient air quality in the Swan Valley (Midland) area. All emissions which may come from brickworks in this area are included in the study. The results of this study will be published by the Department when completed. Depending on the results of this study a further review of licence conditions for all brickworks in the Midland area will be conducted if necessary.