

ALCOA, WAGERUP ALUMINA REFINERY, HEALTH STUDIES

520. Hon J.A. SCOTT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

Regarding the health studies carried out by the Department of Health in Western Australia in the area of the Wagerup alumina refinery, I ask -

- (1) Did the studies include workers at the refinery?
- (2) Did the studies identify any increased health impacts?
- (3) If yes, what were those impacts and what are the most likely causes of the increased illness?
- (4) Will the minister table a copy of the health studies; and, if not, why not?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) No. The survey covered members of the nearby community who claimed that they were affected by emissions from the refinery.
- (2)-(3) The health survey established a high commonality of symptoms reported by the community, especially under certain weather conditions, including wind direction from the refinery. These symptoms were primarily mucous membrane irritation. Extensive environmental monitoring has not revealed the likely causes of these effects.
- (4) No, because the survey is not the property of the Department of Health but is the property of the Alcoa-Wagerup Community Health Awareness Group working group. An interim report was released by the working group in August of this year that includes the whole report of the health survey as well as reports on analytical testing and environmental monitoring and is available as a public document. I suggest that the member contact Alcoa at Wagerup to receive a copy of the interim report.

Members should note that the Department of Health did not carry out a health survey in the area of the Wagerup alumina refinery. The health study was commissioned by the Alcoa-Wagerup Community Health Awareness Group working group and was undertaken by the Survey Research Centre from the School of Public Health at the University of Western Australia. The Department of Health advised the working group on the health study and contracted the Survey Research Centre to undertake a study for the working group. The working group paid for the study.