

ENVIRONMENT, AIR QUALITY PROBLEMS, REGIONAL WA

2324. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development representing the Minister for the Environment

- (1) What action, if any, has the Government taken to address serious air quality problems in regional areas of Western Australia, particularly Collie, Busselton-Dunsborough, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie?
- (2) Why has the Government failed to honour its promise to develop air quality management plans for regional areas of Western Australia?
- (3) What action has the Government taken to promote awareness of air quality problems in Perth and regional centres and to inform the public of the actions that can be taken to reduce them?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following response:

1. The Department is actively involved in the monitoring and management of air quality issues at the nominated locations.
 - Busselton-Dunsborough – particles are the key air quality issue in this area. Sources include motor vehicles, domestic woodheaters and smoke from bushfires and controlled burns. The Department is working with stakeholders to address these issues, including improving burning practices to minimise smoke impacts, and conducting workshops to educate local Government officers on the correct operation of domestic woodheaters and resolution of smoke complaints.
 - Collie – the key air quality parameters of interest at this location are sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particle emissions, domestic woodheaters and smoke from bushfires and controlled burns. Currently, SO₂ ambient levels are well within the NEPM standard. Particle levels are managed through licence conditions imposed on the utility operator and are within licence limits. Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd is another notable contributor to air quality in the Collie airshed. The Department has approached Worsley to develop an air quality improvement strategy that reviews and where necessary upgrades to best practice air pollution controls.
 - Geraldton – the Department is intending to undertake campaign monitoring in Geraldton in accordance with commitments under the Ambient Air Quality NEPM. It is expected that particle emissions from wind blown dust, bushfires, agricultural burning and woodheaters will be of most significance.
 - Kalgoorlie – sulfur dioxide has historically been the main air quality issue in Kalgoorlie. Levels of sulfur dioxide have been dramatically reduced over the past decade as a result of stringent licensing requirements and improved management practices. Levels of SO₂ are now well within accepted standards.
2. State agencies are working with Natural Resource Management groups to identify key air quality issues and actions for individual regions. The NRM groups have developed Strategies which are a statement by community, industry and government of their natural resource assets. Strategies are under development by the Avon, South Coast, South West, Swan and Northern Agricultural regional catchment groups.
3. The Perth Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) contains a number of initiatives dealing with community education and action. Targeted initiatives are also being implemented in regional areas to raise public awareness of air quality issues and to involve stakeholders in planning and implementation of actions.

Initiatives include:

- Haze – key actions include issuing of Haze Alerts via electronic and print media; the pilot woodheater replacement program; wood supply regulations; community education. Seminars were conducted at several locations including Perth and Bunbury to train local Government officers in technical and communication issues associated with domestic woodheater pollution. Additional workshops involving the public and regional areas are planned for 2005.
- Smoky vehicles – members of the public report smoky vehicles to the Department via a dedicated telephone service.
- TravelSmart Work Place – the Department assists workplaces to develop and implement Green Transport Plans, which aim to reduce dependence on private vehicle use.

- AirWatch – a community based education program to improve understanding of air quality issues and change behaviours.
- AQMP Website – on-line information including a range of publications and access to monitoring data.
- Targeted Studies – Air quality investigations are under way in several regional locations including Kalgoorlie and Wagerup. The investigations involve input from local communities and the results are communicated via appropriate media.