

PUBLIC



Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear Sir

15/6/2010

Petition No 71 – Cockburn Cement Ltd, Munster

In accordance with your request to provide a written submission to the above mentioned Committee, I would humbly submit the following information to support the issues raised in my petition and ask that these issues are examined thoroughly as part of your investigations.

Cockburn Cement Ltd (CCL) operates a very large cement and lime production facility at its Russell Rd operations in Munster. Shell sand is extracted from Cockburn Sound under a State Agreement Act and transformed into cement. Limestone is extracted from quarries surrounding the plant and transformed into Lime for the mineral processing industry. Cockburn Cement Produces 1.8 million tons per year and is the biggest producer of lime in Australia.

Lime and Cement is produced in six superheated kilns which have electrostatic precipitators (ESP) as filtration devices to catch dust and particles from these products prior to the flue gases travelling up the kiln chimneys. ESPs are very old technology which is still highly suitable for filtration in certain industries. In the case of CCL, the ESP's have been the point source of failure to halt major dust eruptions of both lime and cement dust from the chimney stacks. The ESP's are electro-magnetic devices which, I believe are electronically integrated with the operation of the kilns. If the kilns are not operating properly, my understanding is that this impacts on the ESP's and at that point there is no filtration of remaining flue gases which emanate from the chimney stacks along with significant volumes of lime and cement dust. It is this dust which travels long distances and covers houses, cars and property in surrounding suburbs.

Over the last 18-20 months, lime and cement emissions from the CCL plant have increased to the point where properties are being impacted upon at distances never before experienced. Prior to October/November 2008 emissions from the plant were infrequent, but when they occurred dust travelled no further than Britannia or East Churchill Avenues. Since 2008, lime and cement dust is now impacting on the properties of residents as far away as Meve in Beeliar and Yangebup, some 3-4 kilometres away.

Lime dust is caustic, particularly when it comes into contact with water. Residents in the suburbs of Munster, Beeliar, Yangebup and Spearwood have complained that lime dust has eaten into the paintwork of cars that are not parked undercover. It is alleged that roof tiles and window glass have been etched by the lime dust and I have seen a report prepared by a

laboratory that shows lime has been the cause of pitting and holes in the Colourbond roof of a resident who lives close to the plant.

At a residents rally held on 8th May over the impact of CCL's dust and odour emissions, we heard terrible stories from local families who claim that the inhalation of lime and cement dust has led to their children having constant scabs in their nasal passages and nosebleeds and a prevalence of breathing problems and allergies, all of which seem to clear up when time is spent away from home in a different environment.

Odour from CCL is caused by the injection of water into the flue gas stream as a way of dampening down the dust emissions. The water evaporates in the hot flue gas stream and turns into an odour which over the last 18-20 months has increased its distance of travel to as far away as Glen Iris, approximately 10 kilometres from the plant. Closer to the plant the odour level is so great that residents simply cannot enjoy their own gardens and outdoor entertainment areas because of the smell. People are also complaining that they cannot open their windows because the odour will fill up their houses with the smell.

Cockburn Cement Ltd is causing major environmental problems across a wide area of the southern suburbs. I put it to the Committee that the Department of Environment is not taking residents complaints seriously and seems intent only with the process of renewing CCL's licence to operate. Very little has been done by DEC to control or stop CCL polluting in this manner, despite the Kwinana branch of the Department acknowledging there has been a significant surge in complaints about lime and cement emissions from the plant. Airborne emission data is collected by CCL in according with their current licence with no real independent analysis of the method of collection. The DEC supposedly analyse the data, although they have agreed that this has not been done on a regular basis and the Department do not carry their own airborne study of CCL emissions, even though they have the equipment and capacity. The DEC therefore relies only on CCL's word about their levels of odour and dust emissions.

There is a solution to all the problems I have highlighted. A bag house filter system that takes the flue gases of all 6 kilns will eradicate both dust and odour emissions from the entire production system. This type of technology was installed by Alcoa as a means of overcoming the emission problems at Wagerup. CCL acknowledge a bag house filter system will resolve the problems at the plant and have in the past suggested the installation of one.

The Minister for Environment can require CCL to install the bag house filter system as part of their licence to operate. I sincerely hope the Committee investigates this terrible situation and comes to the same conclusion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Eva JP', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Philip Eva JP