



Promoting Community Right to Know and Environmental Health and Justice in WA

14/03/2007

Environmental Health Protection neglected in WA... ACE calls for Independent Inquiry

The Alliance for a Clean Environment (ACE) warns that further environmental health bumbles as seen in Esperance, are likely to occur in WA as the State Government has no environmental health protection laws, clear policy directions or adequately resourced agencies to deal with the internationally recognised, global priority of environmental health.

ACE spokesperson Jane Bremmer, states “Environmental Health Protection is the poor cousin, sitting uncomfortably between the clinical health sector and environmental protection. Despite many years of campaigning by community groups, successive WA governments have failed to address the growing environmental health protection needs of WA. Environmental health policies are most acutely needed here because of unprecedented industrial expansions with inherent associated pollution risks. Perversely, the State government have failed to act, allowing the environmental health division to be eroded to a skeleton agency supported by an environmental protection agency clearly without any health-related expertise.

Environmental health risks such as exposure to pollution either by inhalation (air) or ingestion (soil and water) disproportionately affect our children and other vulnerable sub-populations such as the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Children’s developing bodies and brains place them in a much more sensitive category that must be acknowledged by decision makers. Sadly the specific risk to children’s health is ignored in the approval system for industrial developments in WA. It is also neglected across the full spectrum of land-use planning policies, at toxic contaminated site remediations and also within the chemical policies relating to the application of pesticides and other harmful chemicals in the environment, particularly at schools and childcare centres.

Children’s environmental health protection should be underpinning all planning decisions, particularly industrial proposals where the environmental health risks are high. If we don’t act now to protect our children’s health we will be robbing our children of their future and leave a legacy of increased health costs for future generations to deal with.

The community’s exposure to lead dust pollution, as seen in Esperance, is clear evidence of a failed regulatory system that has not recognised the inherent risks associated with the handling of lead based products. This lack of a precautionary approach to health protection, exacerbated by sub-standard environmental monitoring, analysis and (re)action, has allowed a dangerous scenario to develop, unnecessarily placing people’s health at risk. All relevant government agencies should be called to account and the Premier should explain to the public how and why this situation has eventuated.

Alliance for a Clean Environment

PO Box 254, Guildford WA 6935

contact@ace-wa.org www.ace-wa.org

There are many communities in WA facing high environmental health risks associated with industrial pollution sources. Their concerns are dismissed and the relevant regulatory agencies continue to undermine community confidence by manipulating community consultation, information delivery and regulatory tools such as industrial licences and interpretations of laws and guidelines.

This state needs an urgent inquiry into the risks to public health associated with industrial pollution sources and the mismanagement of these risks by State Agencies.”

Media Contact:

Jane Bremmer – Spokesperson

Alliance for a Clean Environment (Inc.)

Phone: (08) 6278 1447

Mobile: 0432 041 397