

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Question On Notice

Tuesday, 14 August 2018

1459. Hon Robin Chapple to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Health

(1) Regarding the maximum microgram per cubic metre (density) limit on PM10 dust and allowable annual exceedances of this limit in the Port Hedland region, I ask:

- (a) what is the current limit on PM10 dust densities in Port Hedland;
- (b) have there been any exceedances of the interim 70 micrograms per cubic metre limit on PM10 dust and allowable 10 annual 24-hour exceedances for the time in which it was implemented;
- (c) if yes to (1)(b):
 - (i) how many exceedances occurred;
 - (ii) on what dates did the exceedances occur;
 - (iii) where did the exceedances occur; and
 - (iv) by how much was the limit exceeded; and
- (d) have dust levels increased since the maximum PM10 dust density allowable was increased from the national standard of 50 to 70?

(2) In the 2016 Health Risk Assessment (HRA) prepared for the Department of Health by Toxikos, the Executive Summary stated “there is sufficient evidence of potential impacts on human health from dust, specifically PM10 in the Toxikos HRA to warrant dust management controls and strategic land-use planning to reduce community exposure to dust”. Referring to recommendations in this HRA:

- (a) have any of the recommendations been implemented;
 - (b) if yes to (2)(a):
 - (i) which recommendations were implemented; and
 - (ii) when were they implemented;
 - (c) if no to (2)(a), why not;
 - (d) are there plans to implement any of the recommendations not currently implemented; and
 - (e) if yes to (2)(d), when are these recommendations going to be implemented?
- (3) The *Port Hedland Air Quality and Noise Management Plan Fact Sheet 2: Dust and Health* published by the Port Hedland Dust Taskforce, states “residence of Port Hedland could tolerate a higher level of dust than would be tolerated in cities because of the unique characteristics of Port Hedland dust”, to what unique characteristics was this statement referring?

Answer

I am advised that:

- (1) (a) There is no PM10 limit for Port Hedland. The current PM10 guideline is 70 micrometres per cubic metre and applies to areas east of Taplin Street. Currently it is a target for areas between the Port and Taplin Street.
- (b) – (d) This question should be directed to the Minister for Environment.

(2) This question should be directed to the Minister for Innovation and ICT; Science.

The HRA is one report that informed the recommendations contained within the Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce Report to Government (the Report) coordinated and led by Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) as Chair of the Hedland Dust Management Taskforce. JTSI have advised that the Report is still being considered.

(3) The Fact Sheet was published in 2010 prior to the Health Risk Assessment and has been superseded. The JTSI website now links to the new Department of Health (DOH) Fact Sheet – *Dust and health, and the Port Hedland Health Risk Assessment – August 2017*.

The statement in the 2010 Fact Sheet was based on the knowledge at that time that suggested crustal dust, which is the main type of dust in Port Hedland, was less potent than urban dust, which mostly comes from combustion sources (e.g. vehicle exhaust). The current Fact Sheet reflects more recent scientific reviews and no longer suggests that Port Hedland dust can be tolerated at higher levels than dust from cities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'A.P.' with a stylized flourish.