

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL Question On Notice

Tuesday, 25 June 2019

2233. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

I refer to question on notice 2125 asked in the Legislative Council on 9 May 2019 and a register that was used in 2004 to identify workers of the Agriculture Protection Board potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T, and ask:

(a) of the register that was used in 2004 to identify workers of the Agriculture Protection Board potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T in weed spraying programs in the period 1975-1985, how many have subsequently died:

- (i) of the deaths referred to in (a), how many were the result of acquiring cancer; and
- (ii) if the answers to (a) and (a)(i) are unknown, why;

(b) are former workers of the Agriculture Protection Board potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T identified in the register that was used in 2004 still able to access compensation from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia fund for workplace injuries of government employees:

- (i) if no to (b), why not; and
- (ii) if yes to (b), how will this be provided; and

(c) will the Minister table the 2004 register that was used to identify workers of the Agriculture Protection Board potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T:

- (i) if no to (c), why not; and

(ii) if no to (c), were individuals on the 2004 register that was used to identify workers of the Agriculture Protection Board potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T advised that they were on the register:

(A) if no to (c)(ii), why not?

(B) if yes to (c)(ii), how were they advised?

Answer

- a) Unknown.
 - i Unknown
 - ii There is no ongoing health monitoring for former Agriculture Protection Board (APB) workers potentially exposed to 2,4,5-T in weed spraying programs between 1975-1985. The expert medical panel led by Professor Armstrong in 2003 did not recommend monitoring programs for former APB workers, as they were not likely to be helpful in reducing mortality. I will seek further advice as to whether there is merit in establishing a monitoring program.
- b) Yes.
 - i. Not applicable.
 - ii. Former APB workers can lodge a compensation claim with the Insurance Commission of Western Australia, which administers the claims process. WorkCover's worker's compensation dispute resolution system allows for decisions on claims to be challenged and independently determined through its Conciliation and Arbitration Services.
- c) No.

- i. Making the personal details for individuals on the register publicly available would compromise their privacy and may prejudice them in obtaining future employment or insurance products.
- ii. No.

(A)(B) The register was used to facilitate workers' compensation claims in 2004 following the expert medical panel finding that APB workers may have an increase in the risk of cancer due to prior exposure to herbicides containing 2,4,5-T. It was not intended to facilitate ongoing monitoring of, or contact with the listed individuals.

Other mechanisms were used to inform and support former APB workers who may have been exposed to 2,4,5-T, including:

- A specialist nurse support and liaison service was set up in the Kimberley region in 2002 for former workers and their families who had health concerns arising from possible exposure to chemicals.
- Workcover, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia and the Departments of Agriculture and Health provided staff to attend in the Kimberley region in 2004 in order to educate potential claimants and assist them in filling out workers' compensation claim forms.
- The Department of Agriculture funded additional administrative support through the offices of the Department of Indigenous Affairs in Derby, Kununurra and Broome to help former ABP workers and dependents of deceased workers complete compensation claims arising out of chemical exposure.
- Former APB workers identified in the Kimberley Chemical Use Review were informed in writing of the review findings, as well as the expert medical panel's report and the Government response to that report.

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