Pilbara News
Wednesday 4/10/2006
Page: 3

Parlimentary plant probe

Watson demands answers over Burrup Fertilisers safety concerns

By Ben Cranston

BURRUP Fertilisers has come under the microscope in Parliament with Greens MLC Giz Watson demanding to know more about a spate of incidents at the plant.

Watson fired a barrage of questions in Parliament demanding to know how many incidents had been reported to the Department of Environment and Conservation since the plant went online.

She requested a complete list of all spillages, leaks and emissions and accidents as well as the nature of warnings and advice supplied to surrounding industries.

Ms Watson was also concerned Hearson Cove was often down wind of the plant and requested to know what warnings were provided at the beach.

Eight incidents have already been reported to DOCEP since the plant went live.

But Education Minister Ljiljanna Ravlich, representing Environment Minister Mark McGowan, said Burrup Fertilisers had upgraded its communications with surrounding industries by installing a system called MissionMode that gave advice to surrounding industries in the event of an incident.

According to MissionMode Solutions the system allowed Burrup Fertilisers to send mass alert notifications and collaborate with adjacent mining, engineering and service companies, authorities and other stakeholders on the Burrup.

The system is fully operational and Burrup Fertiliser managing director Pankaj Oswal said the company was confident the system would help the company comply with Department of Consumer and Employment Protection guidelines and meet safety and protection needs of the community.

Member for North West Coastal Fred Riebeling said if an incident occurred everyone should know about it immediately but hoped Burrup Fertilisers was focusing more on preventing another incident than dealing with the consequences.

The first incident reported to the DEC was in January this year when the contents of the Western Sedimentation Basin were discharged into salt flats prior to the imminent arrival of Tropical Cyclone Clare.

Then in April 2006 seawater was released onto the site after two separate pipe bursts in a seawater cooling system.

Later that month high pH water leaked onto salt flats following water wash down of ammonia released through a flare.

In May process gases, steam and the solvent, Amdea, were released into the atmosphere through vents following a plant upset.

In July freshwater was released onto the site following a pipe burst in the process system and in August unburnt ammonia vapour was emitted into the atmosphere through flare due to inefficient combustion while flaring to maintain pressure in storage tanks.

Also in August waste gases were released into the atmosphere through vents following a plant upset.

Finally in August salt water was released onto the site following two separate pipe bursts in a seawater cooling system.